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LEWIS XVI

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PRIVATE MEMOIRS

RELATIVE TO THE

LAST YEAR OF THE REIGN

OF

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LEWIS THE SIXTEENTH,

LATE KING OF FRANCE.

B 662

By ANT. FR. BERTRAND DE MOLEVILLE,
MINISTER OF STATE AT THAT TIME.

Tranſlated from the Original Manuſcript of the Author, which has never been publiſhed.

WITH FIVE PORTRAITS, FROM ORIGINAL PICTURES,
OF THE ROYAL FAMILY OF FRANCE.

——— *quæque ipſe miſerrima vidi*
Et quorum pars ——— VIRG.

IN THREE VOLUMES,

VOL. I.

VV. b. 2

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THE Publiſhers are authoriſed by M. de Bertrand to declare, that the Portraits of the Royal Family of France, given in this Work, are all engraved from Original Pictures, received in preſents from their late Majeſties; and that they are, in his opinion, the moſt faithful Likeneſſes that have hitherto appeared.

The PORTRAITS are to be placed as follows:

LOUIS XVI. to face the Title-page of Vol. I.
The QUEEN, to face the Title-page of Vol. II.
LOUIS XVII. to face Page 42 of Vol. II.
PRINCESS ELIZABETH, to face the Title-page of Vol. III.
MADAME ROYALE, to face Page 42 of Vol. III.

In the Preſs, and ſpeedily will be publiſhed,

In One Volume Octavo,

PRIVATE MEMOIRS relating to ſome of the moſt intereſting Particulars of the French Revolution. By M. le MARQUIS DE BOUILLE.

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ERRATA IN VOL. I.

Page	6.	line 14.	*for* ſurround *read* ſurrounded
	14.	— 21.	*for* 2d, The power *read* 2d, That the power
	33.	— 15.	*for* inſuperable *read* inſeparable
	121.	— 9.	*for* of my intendant *read* of my being intendant
	163.	— 11.	*dele* état
	182.	— 19.	*for* had named *read* ought to have named
	329.	— 8.	*for* October *read* November
	341.	— 11.	*for* others being *read* others as being
	346.	— 13.	*dele the* comma *after* increaſing
	359.	— 14.	*for* de ſalut *read* le ſalut
		18.	*for* terme *read* tenue
	386.	— 3.	*for* par une *read* pas une
	389.	— 18.	*for* je vous *read* je vois
	399.	— 14.	*for* c'eſt un *read* c'eſt ce
	400.	— 13.	*for* les acablent *read* les accablant
	403.	— 5.	*for* a leur nature *read* et leur nature

PRIVATE MEMOIRS.

INTRODUCTION.

WHILE I was employed in arranging the various notes and obſervations which I had made on thoſe incidents of the French Revolution, in which I myſelf was principally concerned, I had no intention that the following Memoirs ſhould be publiſhed during my life. My chief view, in this work, was to do juſtice to the character of Lewis XVI.; to detect the calumnies invented by the moſt wicked of men to juſtify the dethroning, impriſoning, and murdering the moſt virtuous of kings. Placed in ſituations that afforded me opportunities of knowing the principles on

which his Majeſty acted, and the motives of his conduct at a moſt important criſis, I conſider myſelf as a neceſſary witneſs in the great cauſe between Lewis XVI. and his murderers, of which poſterity is to judge.

My firſt deſign was, that thoſe Memoirs ſhould be reſerved for the impartial judgment of future ages, as my perſonal teſtimony reſpecting all the facts within my knowledge: but it has been ſuggeſted to me ſince, that thoſe facts would derive a greater degree of authenticity from their being ſubmitted to the contradiction of all cotemporaries, who think themſelves intereſted in refuting them; that the truth of theſe Memoirs may be brought to the teſt of that croſs examination, I have been prevailed on not to defer their publication any longer.

The honour of the French nation loudly demands that all the manœuvres, intrigues, and conſpiracies that brought on the preſent Revolution ſhould be laid open; that all the facts ſhould be known; that the real

real criminals ſhould be branded for the juſtification of the innocent; that the authors of ſuch general calamity and of ſo many atrocities may not be confounded with their numerous victims. Truth and juſtice ſhall trace the line which ought to diſtinguiſh and ſeparate the errors which produced and favoured the Revolution, from the horrid crimes which diſgraced it. This ſeparation will exhibit on one ſide but a ſmall number of men, the greateſt portion and the moſt blood-thirſty of the guilty having already been overtaken by the divine vengeance. On the other ſide will appear the whole French nation, compoſed of different parties, now more divided by their recollections than by their opinions; for the greateſt part being at length enlightened by time and by misfortune, deteſt thoſe whoſe exaggerations led them aſtray; they are now more eſtranged by the hatred which they ſuppoſe in each other, than by that which they really feel; all are haraſſed by, and diſguſted with the Revolution; all feel the neceſſity of a general union to obtain

the eſtabliſhment of that order and tranquillity for which they all ſigh, and are willing to purchaſe by reciprocal ſacrifices, and by the oblivion of all injuries and reſentments. How can they refuſe to forget and forgive the conſequences of errors, into which almoſt every individual of the French nation have been led; for there is hardly one who did not wiſh for ſome change in the Government, at a period when the minds of men were in ſuch a ſtate of exaltation, that the antient edifice of the Conſtitution was in danger of being totally overturned, if at all attacked? To vows imprudently made, to the chimerical and ambitious hopes of hot-headed and factious men; to an inconſiderate deſire for a new order of things, was owing that general fermentation, of which a claſs of men, as artful as perfidious, took advantage, to throw all into confuſion. Since then every one has, in ſome way or other, helped on the Revolution, this ought to produce a reciprocal forgiveneſs, as univerſal as the errors from which it originated—I ſay the errors,

errors, not the crimes; for I am far from thinking that certain execrable deeds, objects of everlaſting ſhame and grief to the French nation, will ever be forgiven by it. But fortunately the greateſt criminals, the chiefs of the Regicide faction, no longer exiſt; and among thoſe of their accomplices, who have the misfortune to be ſtill alive, how few there are who were not driven by threats and by terror, rather than prompted by native wickedneſs, and who would expiate the crime of their cowardice, if remorſe could expiate ſuch a crime.

It is known that the Deputy Vergniaux ſeemed in deſpair, and paſſed the whole night immediately after the king's condemnation in tears; and it is probable that the ſame night was as dreadful to all his colleagues, if we except a ſmall number of conſummate villains, who in their abſurd ferocity declared in the National Aſſembly, that Lewis XVI. deſerved death for the ſingle crime of being a King, and condemned him merely becauſe they wiſhed to deſtroy royalty.

In ſpite of the fermentation, and almoſt madneſs, that agitated France after the 10th of Auguſt and 3d of September 1792, I am convinced, that if the National Convention had been able to thruſt from among them a few ſanguinary monſters,—the Robeſpierres, the Marats, the Cuthons, the St. Juſts, the Collot d'Herbois', the Barreres, &c. &c.—the prevailing ſentiment in the Aſſembly reſpecting the King, would have been a ſentiment of veneration for his virtues, and compaſſion for his misfortunes: and had it not been repreſſed by terror from the aſſaſſins who ſurround them, what follows would have been the language, as, I am perſuaded, it expreſſes the feelings of that Aſſembly: "The monarchy is overthrown, but not by us; it is the effect of that Conſtitution which, by removing from the throne all ſtrength and all ſupport, rendered its fall inevitable. The public voice, on which all our power depends, now loudly calls for a new order of things: the people, declared free and ſovereign, wiſh

to

to begin the exercise of their sovereignty: the people call for a republic, and as the call is general, it is our duty to acquiesce, even if their desire were more unreasonable; and their preference of a republican form of government seems the less equivocal, that it has been manifested during the reign of one of the mildest Monarchs, one so worthy of the throne, and so formed for inspiring the people with a love of royalty. But we will impose no hardship that is not indispensably connected with our submission to the will of the nation; we will shew ourselves worthy of being the Representatives of France by our respect for your virtues and your misfortunes, and by our eagerness to record your benevolence, and by doing all justice to your good intentions. Do you yourself choose your future abode, and wherever you go be assured, that you will be accompanied by our sympathy, our love, and our gratitude; and that the republic will ever consider itself as bound by the most sacred ties to secure to you and your family a most honourable retreat. Allow

us calmly to make the moſt dangerous perhaps, but certainly the moſt important, experiment that a nation can make; whatever the event may be, it will decide the great problem reſpecting the ſovereignty of the people, the bounds of political liberty, and whether a ſteady republican government can be eſtabliſhed in a great empire; we ſhall at leaſt have the glory of having devoted ourſelves for the purpoſe of giving a great and uſeful example or leſſon to mankind. Adviſe the foreign States, your allies, not to intermeddle with our affairs; for if they force us into a war, the whole French nation will unite to puniſh them, and to ſhew the world, that numerous armies, compoſed of men inſpired with the enthuſiaſm of liberty, and armed in defence of their rights, are invincible. Above all, adviſe the royaliſts not to ſhew themſelves our enemies; we bear no ill-will to them; we can never hate thoſe who are your ſincere friends; do not let them prolong, by fruitleſs efforts, a conteſt, the iſſue of which intereſts them as much as us. If the French people are really

really happier under a republican government, than they were under monarchy, your well-known love for them convinces us that their happineſs, to a mind benevolent and diſintereſted as yours, would prove a compenſation for your own ſacrifices *. But on the other hand, if our hopes ſhould be fruſtrated; if it ſhall be demonſtrated by the reſult of the preſent trial, that monarchy, prudently limited, is the happieſt form of government, and the only one ſuitable to France; we will be glad to return to our beloved monarch; our hands will rebuild his throne on ſo firm a foundation, that it ſhall never more be ſhaken. We will inveſt you with a power, whoſe limits ſhall be no reſtraint on the authority of a good King."

Such, I ſay, would have been the determination of the great majority of the National Aſſembly after the 10th of Auguſt 1792, if they had not been under the in-

* This was the very ſentiment that Lewis XVI. expreſſed to the Deputy Manuel, when he announced to him in the Temple, that the National Aſſembly had decreed a Republic.

fluence

fluence of terror; if the monſters above enumerated had never exiſted; and if, as Grangeneuve declared in the Aſſembly on the 16th of January 1793, if every means that could operate on the minds of men had not been put in force, to draw from them individually the ſentence of condemnation againſt the King, which, after all, was obtained by a very ſmall majority.

If the meaſure above indicated, as moderate, as prudent, as generous, perhaps, as the circumſtances would admit, had been adopted, the National Convention would have diſconcerted and diſarmed all the oppoſing parties within the kingdom; and the neighbouring nations, inſtead of attacking the Revolution, would have contemplated its courſe with that ſilent attention and aſtoniſhment which a great and important phenomenon never fails to excite.

If the rapacious ambition of any foreign Power had prompted it at that critical period to declare war againſt France, with a view to ſeize on ſome of her provinces, the juſt cauſe which the French armies

mies would in that caſe have ſuſtained, muſt have ſecured them victory; and every Frenchman would at this moment rejoice in their ſucceſs and participate in their glory.

" O my countrymen! whatever have been, whatever are your political opinions, I read in your hearts the ſentiments I have juſt expreſſed; I hear your groans on account of the diſaſters, the horrors that the Revolution has produced. You all wiſh it were poſſible to bury them in eternal oblivion. But is this ſenſibility to exhale in barren lamentations? and ſhall your well-founded ſorrow for the wrongs which *cannot* be repaired, prevent your adopting the beſt remedy for thoſe which *can?* Have at length the courage to be juſt and conſiſtent*. Ceaſe to make a crime in ſome, of what

* How can the Conſtitutional Articles, that declare the right of every citizen, without diſtinction, freely to go out of or remain in France, as he pleaſes, be reconciled with thoſe decrees which pronounce death and confiſcation of goods as the penalties of emigration, without excepting women, children, old men, prieſts, or even thoſe who had no means of eſcaping the daggers of aſſaſſins, but by flight out of the kingdom?

you

you have granted to others as a right. You have proved that citizens may be found in every claſs worthy of the higheſt employment in the State by their abilities; let it now be proved that they are deſerving of them by their juſtice, their moderation, and their wiſdom, becauſe thoſe virtues are as neceſſary under a republican government as in a monarchy. Victories enough have immortalized the bravery of the French armies, and proved their immenſe ſuperiority over thoſe of their enemies. It is not on the Frontiers that the moſt dangerous enemies of the national happineſs are to be found; but among yourſelves. Are you not at once attacked by anarchy, the abuſe of power, rapacity, jealouſy, mutual hatred, by all thoſe paſſions which excite to crimes, and which endanger liberty and property? Thoſe are the foes you have to overcome. Your haraſſed country demands no more triumphs, no more laurels at your hands; it requires repoſe; it requires happineſs; neither of which is to be obtained but by a

govern-

government eſſentially founded on juſtice. It expects freedom, no doubt; and no nation had a better title to expect it; but not that freedom of which Robeſpierre and Marat were the apoſtles, and under which it was ſo long and ſo cruelly oppreſſed.

"The freedom which France requires is that which will ſecure to each individual the moſt extenſive lawful exerciſe of all his phyſical and moral faculties. Find, if you can, the elements of this freedom, or rather the power of producing it in your preſent republican form of government. Find there the means of rendering the French people of all claſſes more happy than they were under a monarchical form of government: then, but not till then, will you be able to flatter yourſelf with having eſtabliſhed the republic; becauſe you will then have the general intereſt to ſupport it. But do not imagine that the preſent race of mankind can remain any longer in a ſtate of wretchedneſs and miſery, without ſome other compenſation than the uncertain perſpective of happineſs to be enjoyed by their poſterity.

poſterity. Weigh with attention the advantages and diſadvantages of your republican conſtitution; compare them without prejudice with thoſe of the antient monarchy, of the abuſes of which I am as great an enemy as any of you can be; but what neceſſity is there for re-eſtabliſhing the abuſes? Compare your preſent government with a monarchy as wiſely limited and regulated as the antient conſtitution of France might be. When you have calmly made this compariſon, and weighed every circumſtance, you will be able to decide, whether the moſt diſtinguiſhed writers on government, antient and modern, have all been under an error, when they aſſerted, 1ſt. That the more extenſive and populous an empire is, the more power is required to be placed in the hand of Government:

" 2d. The power of Government diminiſhes in proportion to the number of hands which exerciſe it. The more people there are in any country to command, the fewer will there be to obey:

" 3d. That

" 3d. That popular elections are more favorable to intriguing, reſtleſs, and wrong-headed men, than to prudent and virtuous citizens:

" 4th. That the expence of Adminiſtration is infinitely more conſiderable in a republic than in a monarchy; becauſe in the firſt, a greater number muſt have employments.

" If all thoſe propoſitions are erroneous, and if you can demonſtrate this, not by words, but by facts, you may in that caſe bring the majority of the nation to continue to approve of a republican form of government; but on the contrary, you will do well to remember, that if any one of them is true, the fate of the republic is decided; and all your efforts, all your talents, and the moſt deſpotic meaſures, will only be able to retard its fall and your ruin a very ſhort time. It is to be hoped then that you will be ſufficiently prudent and courageous to behave like real patriots, and not to conceal the truth, but to declare it openly; and if the prevailing

deſire

deſire of the citizens at the approaching primary aſſemblies, being enlightened by your wiſdom and experience, and uninfluenced either by bribery or by terror, ſhould declare for monarchy; if the certainty of finding in the legal ſucceſſor of Lewis the XVIth the faithful executor of the laſt will of that good King *, ſhould determine the nation to reſtore the antient throne of the Bourbons; you will have the glory of having prepared and promoted that happy event. France, being thus reſtored to her King and to happineſs, will forget all your paſt errors, and will remember with gratitude this laſt bleſſing which ſhe will receive from you."

Thoſe to whom this is addreſſed ought not to deſpiſe the advice it contains, becauſe it comes from an Emigré; for that Emigré can, with propriety, no more be called an ariſtocrate than a democrate; he is, what he has always been, a down-

* "I forgive, with all my heart, thoſe who have become my enemies, without my having ever given them any reaſon for being ſo; and I pray that God may forgive them alſo."
TESTAMENT DE LOUIS XVI.

right

right royaliſt, and that from a love to his country, having always been convinced that France can never be happy but under a monarchical government. After I was placed in ſituations that enabled me to know the perſonal character of Lewis XVI., I confeſs that my original attachment to monarchy was ſtrengthened by the contemplation of his virtues; but if ever my country ſhould become more proſperous and happy as a republic than it was as a monarchy, though I ſhould for ever bitterly lament the ſad fate of the king and royal family, yet my wiſhes and prayers for a continuation of the proſperity of France would be as ſincere as thoſe of the moſt ardent republican.

I foreſee, without uneaſineſs, that the publication of theſe Memoirs will offend the violent of all parties, but I have formed the reſolution of making no anſwer to any attack that may be made againſt my political opinions. I have freely declared them. I leave them to anſwer for themſelves, and to the judgment of the candid; however, I retain the right of rectifying in the origi-

nal ſuch as may appear hereafter, in my own judgment, to be erroneous. As for the facts which I have related from my own knowledge, for theſe I think myſelf anſwerable. I defy the moſt violent of my enemies to bring contradictory proof to any one of them; and I now come under the engagement of bringing the moſt inconteſtible evidence of the truth of all that hereafter may be conteſted.

CHAP. I.

A view of the ſtate of France, previous to the aſſembling of the States General in 1789.—*Their convocation abſolutely neceſſary.—The advantages which might have been derived from it.—The cauſes of the miſchiefs which followed.—The character of Lewis XVI.—Of M. de Maurepas.*

THE memoirs of a miniſter, who remained only five months and a half in power, may be ſuppoſed to contain nothing very intereſting to hiſtory; yet no period of equal duration can preſent ſuch a number of extraordinary and diſaſtrous events as that which unhappily terminated the reign of the virtuous and unfortunate Lewis the Sixteenth; a few months of which furniſh a greater number of important incidents than whole years of the brilliant reign of Lewis the Fourteenth.

Theſe Memoirs are drawn up from notes which I made during and ſince my adminiſtration, of ſome intereſting occurrences, ſome of which are very little, and others not at all known. I had the beſt opportunities of being well informed of them, from the particular confidence with which my zeal was honoured by the king and queen, and from my private correſpondence with their majeſties till the fatal period of the 10th of Auguſt 1792.

Theſe events, which I have claſſed according to their dates, and related with the ſimplicity and ſcrupulous truth which ought to characterize hiſtory, will aſſiſt in completing that of the Revolution, and give a juſt idea of the various perſons who acted a part in its different ſcenes. But above all, I wiſh to unveil the real character, the virtues, and imperfections of our unfortunate monarch, whoſe conceſſions to his people, and deſire to ſee them happier, was ſo cruelly and ungratefully repaid.

Had the council at that time been compoſed of firmer and more enlightened miniſters,

ſters, the pious intentions of Lewis might have been fulfilled; not by the extravagant, and at all times dangerous, expedient of changing the government, but by reſtoring the original vigour to our ancient monarchy, by re-eſtabliſhing its excellent laws, and by the reformation of abuſes which were the conſequence of thoſe laws having become obſolete. People of moderation would then have found in this government, ſo unjuſtly decried, the baſis of a liberty as real and extenſive as that which the Engliſh are ſo proud of, and which was ſecured to us and increaſed by a more vigilant and active police. We ſhould have found in our laws the prohibition of Lettres de Cachet, the neceſſity of obtaining the conſent of the States General in order to eſtabliſh taxes in proportion to the means of the contributors, the reſponſibility of miniſters and of all the agents of government, the equality of every citizen in the eye of the law; in a word, all that the nation could deſire, all that the deputies to the

States General were inſtructed by their conſtituents to demand.

This was what ought, and certainly what would have been, effected by the meeting of the States General, had they been firmly retained within their ancient limits, their powers, and their rights, by a miniſter who poſſeſſed the virtues, energy, and abilities of the immortal L'Hopital, whom (as the preſident Henault obſerves) we ought to have before our eyes as a model, by which to judge of thoſe who in difficult times dare pretend to fill the ſame place.

But becauſe the States General produced the moſt execrable revolution that ever exiſted, is it Lewis we ought to accuſe? After being ſo unworthily outraged by the guilty authors of this revolution, can he with juſtice be reproached by its numerous victims? No, certainly he cannot; for no one is ignorant that it was not in his power to refuſe aſſembling the States General; he was forced to it, not only by the univerſal

verſal cry of the kingdom, but by the deplorable imprudence of the parliaments, in declaring "that they did not repreſent the nation, as they had hitherto pretended to do; that the regiſtering the laws could not ſupply the want of the national conſent in matters of taxation; that they would no longer exert a right which they had uſurped, and which conſcience and honour forced them to relinquiſh."

Shall it be ſaid that the king, though forced to convene the States General, has at leaſt to reproach himſelf for not having employed miniſters capable of moderating and directing their meaſures? But ſituated as he was, how could he be ſufficiently acquainted with the characters and talents of men, to enable him to make a better choice? Can it be forgot, that the king and queen had always an extreme repugnance againſt Mr. Necker; that in calling him to the miniſtry in 1788, their majeſties only yielded to the public opinion, and to the unanimous deſire of the nation, by which he was conſidered as the only man capable of re-eſta-

bliſhing public affairs. His ſecond recall, in July 1789, was ſtill leſs a matter of choice; and this fatal neceſſity of recalling Mr. Necker gave him the power of forming the miniſtry as was moſt agreeable to himſelf.

The double repreſentation of the Tiers may be juſtly regarded as one of the principal cauſes of our diſaſters. The king is blamed for having conſented to it, contrary to the advice of the majority of the Aſſembly of Notables. But I muſt obſerve upon this head; that the people were already prepared for revolt, by the inſurrections to which they had been excited ſix months before: they had been taught to know their own ſtrength, and to deſpiſe that of the government; conſequently, if inſtead of conſenting to the double repreſentation of the Tiers, the king had embraced the meaſure of diſmiſſing Mr. Necker, whom the commons then regarded as their zealous protector and as their father, it is more than probable that the people, attributing his diſgrace to his popularity, would have

riſen

riſen everywhere in his favour, as they did in the month of July following, and would have equally forced his majeſty to recall him, and to grant the double repreſentation of the Tiers Etat. I ſhall even add, that in ſuch circumſtances it would have been very difficult for the king to have avoided being drawn in by the ſpecious reaſons which Mr. Necker employed to determine him. He repreſented to the king, "that the attacks which the parliaments, ſupported by the nobility, had made on his authority, had almoſt annihilated it; that the conduct of the clergy, in the firſt Aſſembly of Notables, proved but too well that their ſentiments and wiſhes correſponded with thoſe of the nobility and magiſtracy; that it could no longer be concealed that all thoſe different bodies uniting to demand the convocation of the States General, was leſs with a view to re-eſtabliſh the royal authority than to render it quite impotent; that this would be the reſult of their deliberations, unleſs the two firſt orders were bereaved of that weight

weight which the ancient form of convocation gave them in the aſſembly; that the only means of attaining this important end was to compoſe the order of the Tiers of a number of deputies equal to that of the two other orders united; that no law exiſted to regulate the number of deputies that each order ought to ſend; that there was not an inſtance of two convocations being uniform in this reſpect, and therefore the meaſure he propoſed, ſo far from being irregular, was no more than the exerciſe of a right which the king always had poſſeſſed, of fixing the number of the deputies of every order; that the third order was greatly intereſted that the king ſhould have it in his power to protect it from the oppreſſive enterprizes of the two others; and that a ſenſe of gratitude for this mark of confidence, as well as a regard for its own intereſt, would undoubtedly engage the third order to ſtrengthen his majeſty's hands, and enable him to re-eſtabliſh a ſolid and vigorous government, without which the monarchy was loſt." Such were the arguments

arguments which Mr. Necker employed in ſupport of the famous reference to the council, upon which the double repreſentation to the Tiers Etat was granted; and unfortunately there was not one of the miniſters at that time who was capable of firmly oppoſing this opinion, which the king adopted through the error or the weakneſs of his council.

It is inceſſantly repeated, "that all might yet have been prevented, had the king placed himſelf at the head of his troops, and of his nobility," &c. &c. &c. Of his troops! Could it be believed that there then exiſted many regiments that could be depended on, after experiencing the defection of the French guards and the regiment of Flanders, in both of which corps more confidence had been placed than in any other? Beſides, it was known that M. de Bouillé had written to the king, that of one hundred and twenty battalions of infantry, and eighty of cavalry, which he commanded, he could rely on five battalions only, and theſe were foreign troops.

In

In addition to this, the officers of thoſe regiments the leaſt infected with the ſpirit of the revolution, all agreed, that the very idea of being attacked by the populace, armed with ſticks and pikes, was more terrifying to the ſoldiers than the army of an enemy ranged in order of battle. With regard to the nobility, although thoſe of its members, who owed moſt to the court, had baſely repaid its favours with revolting ingratitude, and although a great many others had adopted the principles of the revolution, there yet remained many brave and loyal Chevaliers of the old ſtamp, who would have ſought the glory of ſaving the monarchy at the riſk of their own lives. But they were not poſſeſſed of ſufficient force to inſure the ſucceſs which their loyalty deſerved. The king was of this opinion. Ought it to be imputed to him as a crime? Ought he to be reproached, becauſe he would not expoſe the lives of his moſt valuable ſubjects, without a moral probability of ſucceſs; he, who would never riſk the life of the moſt obſcure individual

dividual to ſecure his own? Nothing can be more juſt than what M. de Maleſherbes ſaid to me one day, in an intereſting converſation which will be found in theſe Memoirs, "that this extreme ſenſibility, this tenderneſs of diſpoſition, ſo amiable in private life, and in times of tranquility, often become, in times of revolution, more fatal to a king, than even certain vices would have been." Thus it was that the errors of Lewis the Sixteenth may truly be ſaid to have originated in a virtuous principle. As to his weakneſſes, (for undoubtedly he was not exempted from theſe,) I do not endeavour to conceal them. In the courſe of theſe Memoirs, I more than once lament the indeciſion of that unfortunate prince; his repugnance to adopt the bold meaſures which might have ſaved him; his being deficient in that energy of character, that ſelf-confidence which impoſes on the multitude, who are ever ready to believe that he who commands with firmneſs and an air of authority, poſſeſſes the means of enforcing obedience. But I will venture to ſay,

ſay, that the very faults above enumerated did not belong to his natural character, but were engrafted upon it by the ſelfiſh indolence of M. de Maurepas, that ancient miniſter, whom the court flatterers were not aſhamed to call the Neſtor of France, becauſe he reſembled Neſtor in age; having been diſcarded in the former reign, he was now recalled to direct the firſt ſteps of Lewis the Sixteenth in the career of royalty. Previous to the recall of this miniſter, the young prince had been noted for an aukward forwardneſs of manner and impatience of contradiction, through which, however, a goodneſs of heart and love of juſtice always appeared. He did not find in his pupil any of thoſe paſſions ſo common to his years, but the ſeeds of all the precious qualities with which Providence endows the minds of thoſe princes who do honour to the throne, and are deſtined for the happineſs of the people. What taſk could be more eaſy and honourable than that which this pretended Mentor had to fulfil? His care and attention were not required to

render the young monarch virtuous, but to unfold thoſe virtues he already poſſeſſed, and ſo to direct them, that thoſe qualities which form a great prince might take the lead of thoſe which merely form a man of probity; to teach him to eſtimate the talents of men, that he might thereby be empowered to employ them conformably to their abilities. He ought, at the ſame time, to have given him ſuch an idea of his own powers and reſources, as would have inſpired him with a reaſonable degree of confidence in himſelf, and have enabled him to act with that ſteadineſs which always creates reſpect: for a prince of a good underſtanding, who is conſcious of his own value, may ſometimes appear ſuperior, but will never appear inferior, to himſelf.

If M. de Maurepas had conſulted the glory and the happineſs of France, this would have been the path he would have purſued. But a glory only in proſpect, and the happineſs of a nation, were enjoyments of too refined a nature for that miniſter.

niſter. He wiſhed to revenge, or at leaſt to indemnify himſelf, for many years of exile; and the unlimited confidence which the king placed in him, furniſhed him with too ample means. His chief endeavour was to keep the king ignorant of his affairs, diſguſt him with buſineſs, extinguiſh all his energy, and render him an abſolute cypher, that he, the miniſter, might reign in his name. In this manner the firſt ſceptre in Europe became the mere bauble of dotage and indifference. He had perſuaded the king, that he ought never to decide upon any meaſure himſelf, but always be determined by the opinion of the majority in the council. M. de Maurepas was by this means aſſured of always having his own plans adopted, not only becauſe the miniſters, being nominated by him, would give no opinion contrary to his, but alſo becauſe he had accuſtomed them never to carry any important affair to the council, before they had ſubmitted it to his deciſion, which neceſſarily became that of the king. In this manner Lewis the Sixteenth, although

although endowed with good ſenſe and a juſt underſtanding, acted the paſſive part in council which M. de Maurepas preſcribed to him as the only means of exempting himſelf from the reproach of being anſwerable for the faults of adminiſtration. On this account, the king took great care never to let his opinion be known, during the diſcuſſion of any queſtion of whatever importance; and he was always decided by the opinion of the majority. This conduct of the king's, which made him be accuſed of total indifference, was therefore owing to a very different principle. The tedium, inſuperable from ſuch an inſignificant ſituation, promoted his paſſion for hunting, where alone he enjoyed full liberty; and the magnificence with which that diverſion was conducted at Verſailles made him forget the inſipidity to which M. de Maurepas had reduced the regal office; and though the king often puſhed this exerciſe to exceſs, the miniſter took care not to warn him againſt it, becauſe he found his majeſty more pliant to his counſels when over-

whelmed with fatigue than at any other time. He had ſo great an aſcendancy over this prince's mind, as to render him diſtruſtful of all who approached him; even of thoſe very miniſters whom he himſelf had prompted the king to appoint; and while he declared it impoſſible to chooſe any more unexceptionable, he allowed no opportunity to eſcape of depreciating their talents, and their characters, and continually admoniſhed the king to be upon his guard againſt their views, their intentions, and all their meaſures.

This general diſtruſt, which M. de Maurepas infuſed and carefully cheriſhed, for about eight years, in the king's mind, had taken ſuch deep root, that it ever afterwards adhered to him; for even in the moſt dangerous and critical moments of his life, when his ſecurity depended upon it, he never could be perſuaded to place full confidence in the zeal and fidelity of his moſt devoted ſervants.

M. de Maurepas deſerves alſo the ſevereſt blame for neglecting to employ any means

to correct the king's exceſſive timidity, which almoſt deprived him of the power of ſpeech when he was in company with people whom he was not in the habit of ſeeing every day. His reſtraint, upon thoſe occaſions, made him forget, for the time, things which he was perfectly well acquainted with, although he poſſeſſed a very happy memory. M. de Maurepas certainly might in a great degree have corrected this weakneſs, at all times a great inconveniency, but at this particular time dangerous to the throne; but ſo far from remedying the evil, M. de Maurepas increaſed it by his ſatirical raillery at the rough abruptneſs of the king's manner, and upon what ſome of the courtiers had the inſolence to call "*ſes coups de boutoir**. Ah! if he had indeed been capable of giving ſuch ſevere blows, how much is it to be wiſhed that he had directed them againſt thoſe falſe, ambitious, and ungrateful men; thoſe traitors, whoſe baſe and perfidious plans have brought on a

* A vulgar expreſſion, the literal ſenſe of which is, "the blows of a boar's tuſk."

revolution, the details of which are ſo ſhocking, that if we had found them in a hiſtory of the moſt barbarous nation, we ſhould have ſuppoſed them greatly exaggerated; a revolution, which has been juſtly compared to the irruptions of a frightful volcano, announced by a hollow awful murmur, and by the ſhaking of the neighbouring mountains, finally burſting forth in torrents of fire, ſpreading death and deſolation all around.

In following up this compariſon, it may be ſaid, that if the indifference and ſelfiſhneſs of M. de Maurepas excited the fermentation of the impure elements of the revolution, the incapacity and extravagant violence of the archbiſhop of Sens conducted the king and the monarchy to the mouth of the volcano, and the ambition and fooliſh vanity of Mr. Necker precipitated them into it. As the connection which I had with the two laſt-mentioned miniſters, in the year 1788, when I was intendant of Brittany, and the events which took place in that province, where the revolution actually began,

began, may throw ſome lights upon its origin and firſt progreſs; I will ſuccinctly enumerate the particulars in theſe Memoirs, becauſe a knowledge of the ſymptoms which were the forerunners of this too memorable cataſtrophe are not leſs intereſting or leſs uſeful than that of its conſequences.

CHAP. II.

Character of the archbiſhop of Sens.—The King's opinion of him.—Firſt Aſſembly of Notables.—Intrigues to overturn M. de Calonne's plans.—Their ſucceſs.—The archbiſhop of Sens appointed firſt miniſter.—Project of reformation in the magiſtracy.—Motives of my repugnance to concur in this ſcheme communicated to the chancellor.—His diſſimulation.—My departure for Brittany with M. de Thiard.—His character.—Arrival of orders from the king.—I ſend my reſignation.—The miniſter's anſwer.—A capital fault of the archbiſhop of Sens.—Reflections.

MONSIEUR de Brienne archbiſhop of Sens, who had long ardently aſpired to the miniſtry, had always been kept out, in ſpite of the high reputation of his talents, upon account of the bad opinion which the king entertained of his morals and principles. When it was propoſed to his majeſty to receive this unworthy prelate (at that time archbiſhop of Thouloufe) into

into the council, the pious prince anſwered with indignation, "The man does not believe in God." The prelate being apprized of the motives of his majeſty's repugnance, which were but too well-founded, flattered himſelf that he ſhould be able to obviate them. He endeavoured to give an impreſſion of his converſion, by appearing entirely devoted to the cares of his dioceſe, and by practiſing, from time to time, ſome of thoſe public acts of charity which are always cried up, with exaggeration, in the public papers. This edifying courſe of good works was interrupted by the death of the archbiſhop of Paris, M. de Brienne never once doubting but that his reputation was ſo perfectly well eſtabliſhed, that he ſhould now be eſteemed a worthy ſucceſſor to one of the moſt virtuous prelates in France. He accordingly offered himſelf as a candidate, and ſupported his pretenſions by the well known credit and intrigues of the Abbé de Vermont. But the king was of opinion, that a belief in the Supreme Being could ſtill leſs be diſpenſed with in an archbiſhop of Paris, than in a

ſecretary of ſtate, and therefore preferred the virtues of M. de Juigné to the ſuppoſed talents of M. de Brienne. Indeed it has but too evidently appeared ſince, that he poſſeſſed no other talent but that of doing miſchief; and in fact, he did more, and in leſs time, than the moſt ignorant, or even the moſt perfidious miniſter that ever exiſted in France or any where elſe.

The convocation of the firſt aſſembly of Notables, in the year 1788, opened a new proſpect to the ambitious hopes and intrigues of the archbiſhop of Thouloufe. He ſaw that in the preſent circumſtances, the only chance he had of riſing to the miniſtry depended upon his being able to form a party in the aſſembly, ſufficiently powerful to overturn M. de Calonne, who was the miniſter in greateſt credit, and author of a new ſyſtem of adminiſtration, which was at that time laid before the aſſembly. The archbiſhop prepared his batteries accordingly. The proportional contributions to all taxes, and the alienation of honorary rights depending on benefices were the principal meaſures which M. de

Calonne

Calonne propoſed to this aſſembly, in which the clergy had great weight. This attack upon eccleſiaſtical property offered a favourable opportunity for the enemies of the miniſter to excite the moſt violent oppoſition againſt him and his ſchemes, not only in the aſſembly, but alſo at court and in the capital. He was ſo powerfully attacked in ſo many different ways, that his diſgrace ſeemed inevitable. His fall was accompanied with that of the Chancellor, (Hue de Miroſmeuil,) who, after giving his approbation and ſupport to the plans of M. de Calonne, had the weakneſs to abandon him, and join his adverſaries.

In this manner the king was drawn on by a combination of circumſtances, and reduced to the unhappy neceſſity of forming a new council, and of abandoning the reins of government to the archbiſhop of Thouloufe*. This ambitious man was not contented with occupying the ſituation from

* M. de Fourqueux was the immediate ſucceſſor of M. de Calonne; but his ill health prevented his retaining his place longer than three weeks.

which

which he had precipitated M. de Calonne; he never reſted until he was named the principal miniſter, and had ſupreme influence in the departments of all the other miniſters, who, ſome from fear, and others from incapacity, became all the paſſive inſtruments of his deſtructive genius.

The greateſt error the king could be guilty of was to diſmiſs M. de Calonne, before he had put an end to the aſſembly of Notables. It muſt be acknowledged, that this fatal determination, followed by the nomination of the archbiſhop of Sens to the miniſtry, was the immediate cauſe of the revolution. Upon this occaſion, the Queen entirely gave way to that prejudice which the ambition of the archbiſhop of Sens, and the hatred of the Baron de Breteuil, inſpired her with againſt M. de Calonne. Her majeſty muſt have bitterly regretted that ſhe ever employed her influence over the king's mind to ruin that miniſter. As I have as much reaſon to complain of him as to praiſe him, I might, without being ſuſpected of prepoſſeſſion, either

either write an eulogium or a criticiſm on his conduct, if the one and the other were not equally foreign to the object of theſe Memoirs. I ſhall only obſerve, therefore, that in ſpite of the vague and violent declamations echoed from all parts of the kingdom againſt this miniſter, he certainly did nothing to juſtify the hatred and malice with which he was perſecuted. And it is but fair to ſtate, in his vindication, that although the archbiſhop of Sens and Mr. Necker exhauſted all their efforts, aſſiduouſly examined all the papers relating to his adminiſtration, yet they never could find the ſmalleſt proof of thoſe heavy charges which have been urged againſt him.

If M. de Calonne could have foreſeen that the king would not permit him to cloſe the Aſſembly of Notables, he certainly would not have propoſed its convocation; but his too great ſecurity was his chief error. He was deſirous of having his plans adopted by this Aſſembly, being convinced that he could demonſtrate their utility to all who would

would liſten to argument, and diſregarding thoſe who oppoſed him leſs from conviction than from motives of vengeance and perſonal enmity: and he had the imprudent integrity to include in the liſt of Notables almoſt all the members of the clergy, nobility, and the magiſtracy, who, to his knowledge, were ill-diſpoſed to him.

To have had nothing to fear from an aſſembly thus compoſed, and to have derived all the advantages which were expected from it, there was only one line to be purſued; namely, to have waited patiently until the committees had finiſhed their deliberations, all the while expreſſing the utmoſt gratitude to the individual members for their zeal and ſagacity. However ill diſpoſed ſome of them were, with reſpect to M. de Calonne, not one of them was capable of giving a better plan than his. It would be difficult to have any doubts on this head, as it has ſince appeared that the Archbiſhop of Sens and Mr. Necker could do no better than ſlaviſhly follow the line their antagoniſt had traced.

It

It is alſo worthy of obſervation, that amongſt all M. de Calonne's enemies, there is not one whoſe perfidy has not been unmaſked in the courſe of the revolution, and whoſe name is not inſcribed in the liſt of the authors of the diſaſters of France; while he himſelf has acquired new rights to the eſteem and gratitude of all good Frenchmen, by his indefatigable zeal and unlimited ſacrifices for the cauſe of monarchy.

An account of the adminiſtration of the archbiſhop of Thouloufe, (who became archbiſhop of Sens, and afterwards a cardinal,) being no part of my plan, I ſhall content myſelf with obſerving, that no man's real character ſeems ever to have been more miſunderſtood. He was ſuppoſed to poſſeſs energy, becauſe he was violent; learning, becauſe he was poſitive; genius, becauſe he had vivacity; talents for governing, becauſe he criticiſed the adminiſtrations of all his predeceſſors. His friends and adherents, however, have ſince been ſufficiently convinced of their miſtake, by the weakneſs of his reſources, by his ignorance, by the incoherence

herence of his ideas, and the abſurdity of his meaſures.

After having exhauſted the royal treaſury, drained every reſource, annihilated public credit, and ruined the powers of the crown, by employing, upon the ſlighteſt occaſion, thoſe acts of royal authority which ſhould be only reſorted to upon the laſt extremity, ſuch as *lits de juſtice*, *lettres de cachets*, the baniſhment and impriſonment of the magiſtrates, he at length, with boldneſs, but without conſideration, attempted to free the government from the reſtraint of enregiſtering the laws in the ſovereign courts of the kingdom, and of ſupplying this by enregiſtering them in a new court, called *Cour Pleniere*, which he pretended to *reeſtabliſh*, although no ſuch court had ever exiſted in France.

To give to this edict ſome degree of ſplendor, he united with it ſeveral other laws relative to the courts and adminiſtration of juſtice, containing reformations of the utmoſt importance. By one of the new laws, all the ſovereign courts of the kingdom

dom were interrupted till further orders, to prevent remonſtrances and proteſts againſt that raſh regulation.

The cardinal was extremely vain of having conceived this laſt part of the plan, which he imagined was a ſtroke of genius, and he wiſhed to prevent its tranſpiring till the moment of enregiſtering the edicts; this was intended to be done by a *lit de juſtice* at Paris, and by royal commiſſioners, at the ſame inſtant, in all courts of the kingdom. As it would have been neceſſary to have truſted a great number of clerks, if the orders had been forwarded from the offices, according to the uſual cuſtom, a ſecret printing-houſe was eſtabliſhed at Verſailles, and the printers were ſhut up and watched like priſoners till the decrees were printed.

The important day, for the univerſal enregiſtering the edicts, being fixed upon, the king's commiſſioners received orders to ſet out inſtantly for all the cities in the kingdom, where there exiſted ſovereign courts of juſtice, and to remain there till they received

ceived his majeſty's farther orders and inſtructions. In the mean time, great pains were taken to conceal the buſineſs in agitation. This was ſo much attended to, that the orders for the departure of the intendants paſſed through the office of the miniſter of finance, to make it imagined that it related to ſome matter of that nature. But in reality, neither the miniſter of finance, nor any other miniſter, except the *Garde des Sceaux*, (Lamoignon,) were in the ſecret.

At the time I received orders for my departure, it was generally ſuſpected at Paris that the chief object of the archbiſhop of Sens was ſome great reformation in the magiſtracy; and it being contrary to my principles to accept of a commiſſion, without knowing its import, I took occaſion, from the above report, and from my miſunderſtanding with the parliament of Brittany, to explain myſelf to M. Lamoignon. I expreſsly told him, "that if the intended alteration was directed againſt the parliament, its ſucceſs, no leſs than my delicacy, required

required that ſome other ſhould be employed in Britanny; for if I accepted the commiſſion, it would never be doubted but that I was the author of the meaſure, and had ſought this occaſion of revenge; and that ſuch an idea would irritate people's minds ſo much againſt me, that my ſervices in that province would be more prejudicial than uſeful." He anſwered without heſitation, that I was alarmed without cauſe; for that the order for my departure being drawn up by the miniſter of finance, there was reaſon to believe that the object of my commiſſion regarded the buſineſs of that department only; "and you may be aſſured," added he, "that I have no hand in your being ſent." My uneaſineſs was diſſipated by this poſitive aſſurance; and I ſet out for Britanny in the end of April, with the Count de Thiard, who was as ill-informed as myſelf of the object of our commiſſion.

The Count de Thiard was one of the moſt amiable men of the court. It was impoſſible to have more ſweetneſs of diſpo-

ſition, a more pleaſing and eaſy ſtyle of converſation, or a more dignified and graceful manner, than he poſſeſſed. He was generally beloved, and his company ſought after in all the agreeable ſocieties of Paris and of the court; but he was the man of all France leaſt calculated for buſineſs. It tired him to death. He even could not comprehend its language. He was ſeveral years commander in chief in Provence, where he was adored, becauſe he had no duty to perform that was either difficult or diſagreeable. It ſeemed as if he reſided there for no other purpoſe than to give balls and entertainments, of which he did the honours perfectly well. One of the greateſt blunders the court could have committed, was to ſend a man of this deſcription, who hated trouble, to a province, which, even in ordinary times, had been conſidered as the moſt troubleſome to govern of any in the kingdom; but in times of inſurrection, this command ought to have been given to a man inured to public affairs, and capable of overawing the ſeditious by the vigour of

his

his character. It was perhaps imagined, that the amiable qualities of M. de Thiard would have compenſated for that force of character in which he was deficient; but this kind of compenſation never ſucceeded in Britanny. The weakneſs of government, or of its agents, was always extremely dangerous in that province. The only ſucceſsful method of executing the king's orders was to proceed in one ſteady courſe, without being moved by the clamour of turbulent ſpirits, or even by ſciſſions, if they came to be again in vogue*.

During

* Sciſſion was a term made uſe of in the provincial parliaments and aſſemblies of the ſtates, importing, that the members of the parliaments or aſſemblies had broken off all communication, of a private or ſocial nature, with the intendant or commandant of the province. A ſciſſion was never announced until it had been formally deliberated on in a general meeting of the members. The motives were ſometimes of a public and important nature, as the regiſtration of a law by the expreſs order of the king; at other times, the cauſes aſſigned were rather frivolous, ſuch as an expreſſion uſed in a private ſociety, and conſtrued in a bad ſenſe; omitting ſome mark of attention, which, it was thought, ought to have been paid to certain individuals, as attending them to the door, or inviting them to entertainments. But as the members of thoſe aſſemblies often ſtood in need, for

During our journey to Rennes, I communicated to M. de Thiard what had paſſed between the chancellor and myſelf; and I did not conceal my intention of informing the firſt preſident of it. I had alſo reſolved to announce my arrival to the members of parliament, although their ſciſſion with me might have excuſed me from this ceremony, which was uſual when an intendant arrived in the province for the firſt time, or after having been for any conſiderable time abſent. I waited accordingly on the preſident, and after giving him an account of my converſation with the chancellor, I expreſſed my unalterable attachment to the ſound principles of the magiſtracy, and aſſured him, that it would give me real concern to ſee them attacked, if, notwithſtanding M. de Lamoignon's aſſurances, there was any truth in the report concerning the archbiſhop of Sens's project.

themſelves or their relations, of the good offices of the intendant or commandant, who had nothing to aſk or expect in return, and generally kept the beſt tables and the beſt wine in the province, it will not be difficult to determine who were the greateſt loſers by the ſciſſion.

This

This converſation, of which the preſident gave an account to his company, and the viſits I paid the ſame day to all the members of parliament, made the ſciſſion be taken off immediately, and obtained me innumerable deputations and compliments.

We had been about five days at Rennes, when a courier of the cabinet arrived, with an enormous packet for us. This packet contained ſeveral others, ſome of which, to the number of eight or nine, were only to be opened in the *Aſſemblée des Chambres*, which we were ordered to convene on the following day; and the other diſpatches were to be read at the end of the deliberation. The king's orders, which were addreſſed to us, did not contain any explanation of the nature of the meaſure with which we were charged; they only regarded the magiſtracy and the adminiſtration of juſtice: but the cover of one of the largeſt packets, which, from the form, ſeemed to contain *lettres de cachet*, was a little torn by the motion of the carriage. I could not reſiſt my

curioſity to know whether or not my conjectures were well founded. I tore it a little wider, in the preſence of M. de Thiard, who was no leſs curious than myſelf, and I diſcovered that this packet contained only *lettres de cachet*, and that they were deſtined for the members of parliament.

No more was requiſite to convince me that M. de Lamoignon's aſſurances (upon the faith of which I left Paris) were inſincere. But as this was not the caſe with the declaration I made to him, I immediately determined to ſend in my reſignation, by a letter which I read to the firſt preſident, and to the biſhop of Rennes, who happened to be at M. de Thiard's houſe when I wrote. My letter was ſent the ſame day by an extraordinary courier, and the biſhop of Rennes ſet out for Paris, to remonſtrate with the archbiſhop of Sens, imagining that he had ſufficient influence to prevail upon him to renounce, or at leaſt defer, the meaſure relating to Britanny, till the next convocation of the ſtates of this

this province; but he was not liſtened to; and I received from M. de Lamoignon the following letter:

"I ſhewed your letter to the king, Sir; his majeſty deſires me to inform you, that he commands you, in the firſt place, to execute his orders, under pain of diſobedience; and he will afterwards determine concerning your reſignation."

This order embarraſſed me extremely, from the difficulty there was in reconciling its execution with what was expected of me by the parliament and the public, who were informed of the circumſtances of my reſignation. My only reſource was in M. Thiard's ignorance of the duties which both of us had to diſcharge at the *Aſſemblée des Chambres*, and alſo of the terms in which our orders were expreſſed upon this article. It was repeated, in almoſt every page, that "the king's firſt commiſſary, and in default of him, his ſecond," ſhould give ſuch and ſuch an order, and ſhould pronounce ſuch a decree, &c. I concluded, that in quality of the king's *ſecond* commiſſary, I

had merely a paſſive part to act in the aſſembly, and that my preſence was only neceſſary to ſupply the place of the firſt commiſſary, in caſe of his ſudden death or ſickneſs. I knew very well that this was contrary to the cuſtom; but happily M. de Thiard, who never had been engaged in affairs of this kind, was ignorant of it. My reaſons appeared to him very good, and conformable to the tenor of our orders. He did not make the leaſt difficulty on this account, but only begged of me to give him an exact note in writing, of all that he ſhould have to do and to ſay in the parliament, of the reſponſes which it was eaſy to foreſee would be made to him, and what he ought to ſay in return. I wrote this note upon the ſpot, and made it as clear as I poſſibly could; but he did not find it ſuch as he deſired, and begged of me to write another, in ſuch a manner that he ſhould only have to read over what I wrote. In ſhort, he required a dramatic ſcene, and the part of every actor ſo clearly ſpecified as to prevent all miſtakes. I ſet about this taſk, and made

his

his part ſo plain, that a child of ſix years old, who could read, would not have been embarraſſed; and accordingly M. de Thiard was perfectly ſatisfied.

The greateſt, and perhaps the moſt fatal error, which the archbiſhop of Sens committed, as it commenced the diſorganization of the army, was his ſetting almoſt all the troops of the kingdom in motion, with a view of overawing the people by a great appearance of force, and of preventing inſurrections in the towns where his imprudent meaſure was to be executed. He did not reflect, that diſcovering to the people that an inſurrection is thought poſſible, ſuggeſts to them the idea that they are feared, and by this very means renders them formidable. Undoubtedly government ought always to be in a ſituation to repreſs and puniſh inſurrections; but if, inſtead of employing the uſual means, in the prudent manner that a well-regulated police affords, it begins by what is its laſt reſource, and ought never to be adopted except in the utmoſt extremity, by

by exhibiting the whole armed force before the eyes of the people at once, the multitude are ſoon familiarized to what was intended to impreſs them with terror; they ſee the utmoſt force that can be brought againſt them, they compare it with their own numbers, and are inſpired with courage, from a conviction of their own ſuperiority. Thus many regiments may have leſs effect, than a detachment of fifty dragoons, under more prudent management, would have had. In the year 1771, the duke of Fitzjames employed only three brigades of Marechaſſée to conſummate, in Britanny, the moſt abſolute, and perhaps the moſt arbitrary act of authority which was ever exerted in France; namely, the ſuppreſſion of all the parliaments of the kingdom, and the inſtallation of new judges; and the king's commands were fully executed, without cauſing the leaſt popular commotion. No one even dared to murmur upon the occaſion. It will be ſeen, in the following chapter, that M. de Thiard, with much

much more conſiderable means, was employed to carry a much leſs violent meaſure in the ſame province, and failed in a manner that proved fatal to the royal authority.

CHAP. III.

Aſſemblée des Chambres.—Arrival of the king's commiſſaries in the Palais.—Riot of the attorneys' clerks.—Difficulty which the king's commiſſaries found to enter the Grand Chambre.—An account of what paſſed at this ſitting.—Retreat of the king's commiſſaries.—The inſults which they received.—Inſurrection of the people.—Violent exceſſes committed againſt the ſoldiers.—The arrival of freſh troops at Rennes.—The inutility of this meaſure.—Its conſequences.

THE Chambres being aſſembled on the 10th of May, at eight o'clock in the morning, according to the king's orders, I went there along with M. de Thiard. We were eſcorted by his guard, and by a detachment of the regiment of Rohan. The troops were ranged on both ſides of the ſtreet as we went to the palace. The profound ſilence which prevailed for ſome time,

as

as we moved along, was ſoon interrupted by hiſſes, and the noiſe of catcalls from the windows, which were repeated by the mob in the ſtreet, who became more daring and noiſy when they obſerved that the ſoldiers took no notice of them.

M. de Thiard had not placed any troops within the walls of the Palais, having been aſſured that ſuch a meaſure was abſolutely unneceſſary, and that the parliament would be extremely flattered by this mark of confidence. But the conſequence was, that we found the halls, and all the paſſages to them, crouded with young people, moſt of them attorneys' or lawyers' clerks, who received us with the moſt inſolent clamour of hiſſing and hallooing. We were ſo ſurrounded, that we found ſome difficulty in gaining the door of the great chamber. After knocking a full quarter of an hour, without obtaining admittance, we went to another door, accompanied by a croud of the ſpectators, who laughed at our embarraſſment, and their mirth increaſed when they ſaw that our attempts to enter at the ſecond door were equally unſucceſsful.

ceſsful. We next went to the *Parquet* *, where we found ſome of the *gens du roi.* M. de Thiard complained, with great mildneſs, of the incivility of the clerks belonging to the palace, and of the obſtacles we found in entering. He begged of the attorney-general to give notice to the preſident of our arrival, and to let him know that we waited for entrance, until he ſhould order the huiſſiers to open the door. A quarter of an hour elapſed without our receiving any anſwer. We ſent a ſecond meſſage, and at the ſame time M. de Thiard gave orders to the commanding officer of the regiment to ſend the grenadier company to the palace. We waited another quarter of an hour; after which, the aſſembly being informed of the order given to the grenadier company, gave us to underſtand that we muſt ſend our requeſt in writing.

Notwithſtanding the irregularity of this demand, after a moment's pauſe, we ſent the requeſt in writing, as they required, and we went again to the door of the Grand

* The *Parquet* is a large room in the Palais, where the king's advocates and attornies aſſemble.

Chambre.

Chambre. In our way, I was informed by a confidential perſon, that notice was given to all the tradeſmen in town to aſſemble in the ſquare of the Palais at three o'clock, armed with cudgels, the inſtruments of their profeſſions, and in the beſt manner they could. He added, that very violent projects were formed. It immediately occurred to me, that one means of overſetting theſe projects, and the beſt which could be adopted in the preſent circumſtances, would be to abridge the ſeance, by having the laws regiſtered in the ſhort manner that regiſtrations are made in the *lits de juſtice;* namely, by writing only the firſt and laſt line, and leaving a blank ſpace between them ſufficient for inſerting the whole afterwards. I propoſed this matter to M. de Thiard, who approved of it, and deſired me to write it down in his paper of memorandums.

The door of the Grand Chambre was at laſt opened to us; but M. de Thiard had previouſly ordered the officer of the grenadier company to oblige all ſtrangers to withdraw,

draw, and allow none to enter afterwards. When we had taken our ſeats, M. de Thiard pronounced a few ſentences, expreſſive of his regret in being forced, by the king's orders, to execute a commiſſion which might perhaps be diſagreeable to the parliament, though he was himſelf ignorant of the object of it. And I immediately afterwards ſaid, that "notwithſtanding my having received the king's expreſs commands to aſſiſt at this ſitting, I was happy in having no part to perform on the preſent occaſion, as his majeſty's commiſſioner, and in being allowed the place I was entitled to in the aſſembly as *maître des requêtes*, which I would be ever proud to deſerve, by my inviolable attachment to the magiſtracy and the laws, to which the true intereſt of the king could never be in oppoſition."

I had all M. de Thiard's papers before me, and alſo all the packets containing the laws to be regiſtered; and while he was pronouncing his ſpeech, I took that opportunity to write upon his memorandum the form of the order of regiſtration, *by the firſt*

and laſt line. After having written this for his inſtruction, I oſtentatiouſly put another paper, which I held in my hand, into my pocket; and to make thoſe who ſaw me writing imagine that I was only taking a note of the exact time when the ſeance began, I had looked at my watch the inſtant before I began to write. I placed all the papers, regularly numbered, before M. de Thiard, ſo that he could make no miſtake, if he only took up the firſt that lay neareſt his hand. I thought I had ſo well provided againſt all difficulties which might occur, that I ſhould have nothing to do or to ſay in this ſitting. M. de Thiard could have conducted it without difficulty, by ſimply adhering to his written inſtructions. Indeed, a perſon of the loweſt capacity could hardly have been embarraſſed; but M. de Thiard's extreme politeneſs carried him ſo much beyond the proper bounds, in the very opening of the aſſembly, that I was forced, for a moment, to relinquiſh the paſſive part which I had intended to act. When he read the order of *regiſtration by the firſt and laſt line*,

there aroſe a ſlight murmur in the aſſembly, which I did not inquire into the cauſe of; but I thought it neceſſary to obſerve, that this method of regiſtration was conſtantly adopted in the *lits de juſtice*. Here M. de Thiard, carried away by his natural complaiſance, and forgetting his inſtructions, very politely propoſed to the aſſembly to have the regiſtration made out in the uſual way, if that was more agreeable to them. Thinking it neceſſary to cut the matter ſhort, I immediately ſaid aloud, to M. de Thiard, that the aſſembly could not make any reply to his propoſition, becauſe, before they did, it would be neceſſary that they ſhould deliberate; but that he had already deprived them of that power by declaring the king's order, which expreſsly interdicted all deliberations.

M. de Thiard's incapacity for buſineſs, or at leaſt his ignorance of forms, was now evident to the aſſembly, and they endeavoured to take advantage of it. The firſt clerk, either of himſelf, or by the advice of ſome of the members, refuſed to regiſter

by

by the firſt and laſt line, and began to tranſcribe the whole law which had juſt then been pronounced. After three quarters of an hour had elapſed, without his returning to his ſeat, I began to ſuſpect what was paſſing, and gave M. de Thiard a hint, upon which he ſummoned the clerk, and aſked what had detained him. He anſwered, that the tranſcription was not finiſhed. M. de Thiard, finding that it was not executed according to his orders, renewed his injunctions, under pain of diſobedience; but this produced no effect. The clerk being again ſummoned, and interrogated upon the motives of his diſobedience, declared that he would not execute the order, unleſs it was given him in writing. The form of this order was ſimple; but M. de Thiard, who had never written one of that kind, deſired me to dictate it to him. I ſaid to him, that he had only to write his name and titles at the head of the order which he had already pronounced. One of the members of parliament ardently wiſhed that the ſitting might be

prolonged till the mob had time to aſſemble in the ſquare of the palace; and he could not forgive me the crime of having diſappointed his views, by the advice which I gave M. de Thiard upon this occaſion. He threw ſeveral notes out of the window, to inform the public what paſſed in the aſſembly. One of them contained theſe words: "The intendant is the cauſe of all the miſchief. He is a monſter who muſt be ſtifled *."

All difficulties being at laſt ſurmounted, the ſitting continued without further inter-

* M. de Coudic was the name of the member who wrote this note. I name him, to prevent others from being ſuſpected of ſo unworthy an action. The man, unfortunately, was not quite mad enough to be ſhut up. I ſay unfortunately, becauſe in times of public fermentation it is under men of this deſcription that the multitude arrange themſelves, and are carried to the moſt deſperate acts of violence. M. de Coudic, miſled by parliamentary fanaticiſm, was the chief inſtigator of all the troubles which took place in Rennes, from which the revolution in reality began. Immediately upon its breaking out, he became one of its moſt furious demagogues. He afterwards came to London, where he aſſociated himſelf with ſome of the moſt ſeditious clubs, and where he died, after having publiſhed a furious and extravagant pamphlet againſt monarchical government.

ruption,

ruption, and broke up at half paſt twelve, to the great ſurprize of the public, who were juſt then informed, by the arrival of the courier from Nantes, that the ſame meaſure, in the Chamber of Accounts, had detained the aſſembly there thirty hours; and it was known a few days after, that it had taken up nearly the ſame time in all the ſovereign courts of the kingdom, from its not having occurred to any of the commiſſioners to employ the expeditious form of regiſtering by the firſt and laſt line.

In conſequence of the order which had been given, of admitting nobody into the palace, there were few aſſembled at the gate, and a profound calm prevailed when we came out. M. de Thiard concluded that the ſame tranquillity prevailed all over the town; and he gave orders to the detachment, who waited to conduct us, to remain in the ſquare, as we had no occaſion for an eſcort. We were only attended by the guard of the commandant, which conſiſted of about eighteen or twenty men at the utmoſt. As long as we were in the ſtreet

which goes immediately from the ſquare, where the regiment of Rohan was ſtationed, the fear it inſpired preſerved us, thus far, from being inſulted otherwiſe than by hiſſings and whiſtlings, accompanied by the cry of *haro* from the people who ſurrounded us. M. de Thiard miſtook this for the uſual cry of *vive le roi*; but hardly had we turned into the ſtreet which leads to the *Hotel du Gouvernement* than he was undeceived; for the hiſſes and cries redoubled, and were followed by a ſhower of ſtones, levelled, at firſt, at our chairs, which were carried after us: but the attack ſoon became more direct, which did not, however, prevent us from moving forward in the ſame order. I was ſaluted on the head with a large ſtone, which would certainly have extended me motionleſs in the ſtreet, if it had been directed in full force againſt me; but having been originally intended for M. de Thiard, his ſervant interpoſed his arm, which ſaved his maſter, and undeſignedly ſent the ſtone againſt me. I was for ſome time ſtunned; but when I recovered my ſenſes, and ſaw the

the ſize of the ſtone, I was very thankful that I had come off ſo well. M. de Thiard's ſervant was incapable of uſing his arm for ſeveral months. The croud now began to increaſe, and preſſed ſo near us, that we were forced to precipitate our retreat in ſome diſorder. We got into the hotel of the commandant without any further accident, a military detachment having met us near the hotel, and fortunately prevented the populace from overtaking us. The ſoldiers, however, were forced to point their bayonets, to ſtop ſome of the boldeſt of the multitude from burſting in; which, after all, they would probably have effected, had not a young officer ruſhed, quite unarmed, betwixt the people and the bayonets, to prevent the effuſion of blood. This generous action produced a very happy effect, by the turn it gave to the ſenſations of the people. In their enthuſiaſtic admiration they ſeized upon the officer, raiſed him in their arms, with repeated acclamations of praiſe. That part of the mob, who were moſt diſtant from the ſcene, not knowing

what had taken place, concluded that the officer, whom they ſaw elevated, was an enemy to the people; on which they began to throw ſtones with great fury, and the young man was ſlightly wounded in the forehead. When the people immediately *around him* ſaw the blood flow, they gave him all the aſſiſtance in their power, with every expreſſion of ſympathy. In ſhort, he ſo completely occupied them, that the *Cour Pleniere* and the king's commiſſioners were for ſome time forgotten.

The capital error which M. de Thiard committed, and what immediately occaſioned the inſurrection, was the order he was known to have given to the troops not to make any uſe of their arms, except to intimidate; for he had directed, that the ſoldiers ſhould put the rammers into the barrel of their firelocks in ſight of the populace, to prove clearly, in caſe they ſhould have harboured any ſuſpicion of being fired upon, that no harm was intended. Having received this pledge of their ſecurity, the mob became inſolent and outrageous in the higheſt

higheſt degree, while the ſoldiers, on the other hand, were intimidated and paſſive, ſuffering themſelves to be cuffed and kicked, and even allowing their arms to be taken from them, without attempting retaliation or reſiſtance. In ſhort, a party of ſixty armed ſoldiers were ſo obedient to the orders of remaining paſſive, as tamely to allow their ſentry-box to be broken in pieces by an inconſiderable mob, and they themſelves to be beaten and wounded by the broken pieces of this very box.

The people were emboldened to theſe exceſſes, rather from the impunity with which they were permitted to act, than from any idea they had of their own ſtrength. At firſt the diſorder might have been ſuppreſſed, if M. de Thiard had given orders aloud to charge immediately, and fire upon thoſe who did not diſperſe at the firſt warning; but moſt unfortunately, he thought it would be better to endeavour to overawe the people by a more conſiderable appearance of force; and that very night he diſpatched couriers to St. Malo, with orders for freſh battalions

of infantry, a few ſquadrons of cavalry, with ſome pieces of artillery, to march immediately to Rennes. This little army would certainly have been ſufficient to ranſack the town, and exterminate the inhabitants; but as the character of M. de Thiard was too well known for him to be ſuſpected of having ſuch deſigns, the arrival of thoſe troops, ſo far from terrifying the multitude, only rendered the inſurrection more general, and augmented the mortification and diſguſt of the ſoldiers, who were full of indignation at the deſpicable part which they had been made to act.

CHAP. IV.

Aſſemblies held in the Chambre des Lectures. *—Conſequences of theſe aſſemblies.—Imprudent converſations of M. de Thiard.—The danger to which I was expoſed by them.—A parody of the* lit de juſtice *exhibited in the ſtreets by the chimney-ſweepers.—The parliament meets.—Weak meaſures to ſeparate it.—General inſurrection.—Violence of the attorney-general.—Deputation of the parliament.—Publication of its deciſions.—Conduct of the nobility, with reſpect to M. d'Hervilly.—Weakneſs of M. de Thiard.*

IT was particularly recommended to M. de Thiard and me, in our inſtructions, to prevent the parliament from aſſembling in the palace, or elſewhere, after the regiſtering, and a ſufficient number of *lettres de cachet* were ſent us to baniſh the members to their eſtates, in caſe we found that meaſure indiſpenſably neceſſary. M. de Thiard informed

formed the preſident of this, and aſſured him, that he ſhould regret extremely if the parliament, by infringing the king's orders, forced him upon ſuch ſtrong meaſures. The preſident promiſed him to do all that depended upon him to prevent the parliament from meeting. Accordingly, next day, about the ſame hour, ſeveral members having met at his houſe, and M. de Thiard being informed of it, and expreſſing his uneaſineſs, the preſident immediately begged of the members to withdraw.

But while the parliament gave this example of ſubmiſſion to the king's will, aſſemblies were held, night and morning, in the different *chambres de lecture* at Rennes, which might be looked upon as ſo many clubs. Theſe were compoſed of citizens of every claſs, but chiefly of thoſe intemperate ſpirits who were perpetually occupied in diſcuſſing political queſtions reſpecting the means of inſurrection, and in corrupting or intimidating the ſoldiers, &c. Theſe fire-brands of ſedition required to be the more ſtrictly attended to, as it was eaſy to perceive

perceive that their deſign was to force the members of the parliament to aſſemble, as the only means by which they could ſkreen themſelves from the reproach of cowardice, and from the inſults of the populace. This happened, accordingly, a few days after, as I had foretold M. de Thiard, who unfortunately would not believe me; yet he was continually ſaying that, for his own part, he underſtood nothing of buſineſs; and he did not ſcruple to add, that it was M. l'Intendant who directed every thing. There was more truth in the firſt of theſe aſſertions than in the ſecond; our characters were too oppoſite for my advice to ſuit him, and accordingly he ſeldom followed it. But his diſcourſe, which was circulated in the town, increaſed the diſcontent againſt me and the danger to which I was expoſed, as appeared by ſome very violent libels which were publiſhed againſt me. I was even threatened with aſſaſſination, which, indeed, might eaſily have been executed, as it was known that I went every evening to M. de Thiard's, and always returned home about the ſame

ſame hour, attended by one ſervant only. But happily France was not then ſo much familiarized with aſſaſſination as it has been ſince; and notwithſtanding the cautions which I frequently received to avoid one particular corner of a ſtreet, and not to paſs through another, I never was under the neceſſity of making uſe of the piſtols which it was known I always carried in my pocket. But I was aſſured, indeed, that on one occaſion a woman had prevented her ſon from firing a muſket at me from her window.

The military officers were not received in any family in town; and there never paſſed a day in which ſome of the ſoldiers were not attacked or beaten. We were not much more reſpected ourſelves. We ſeldom appeared in the ſtreets without hearing very diſagreeable comments paſſed upon us. To theſe M. de Thiard always returned a gracious ſmile, which the populace (not comprehending its refined delicacy) imputed to affectation, or took for a ſign of fear. This cuſtom of overlooking every attempt which was made againſt royal authority, and

and the licence which was given to degrade and inſult the perſons employed to ſupport it, inſpired the leaders of the inſurrection with the higheſt degree of inſolence. A farce was acted in the ſquares and public ſtreets, particularly under the windows of the commandant and the intendant, which was deſigned as a burleſque on the *lits de juſtice*, the laſt ſeſſion of parliament, and ſome of the new laws. This piece was performed by ſhoe-blacks and chimney-ſweepers, dreſſed in tattered black robes, ſquare caps, and paper cravats, and ſeated on the little ſtools which thoſe blackguards brought for the occaſion, giving, as it was ſaid, an exact repreſentation of the ſcheme of putting the judge on a level with the judged. Printed papers, giving an account of all that paſſed at this royal ſitting of ſhoe-blacks, were diſtributed with profuſion among the populace. Theſe papers contained alſo the ſpeeches which the actors in this farce were ſuppoſed to have pronounced, but which the loud applauſe and mirth of the immenſe crouds which

which followed them prevented from being heard.

M. de Thiard, who dined with me that day, happened to arrive while this entertainment was going forward under my window. The idea appeared to him very amuſing; and he endeavoured to make me laugh at ſome of the ſarcaſms contained in a piece, where we were both made to act the loweſt and moſt indecent parts. I could not help ſaying to him, with ſome degree of ſpleen, "that if this farce had been acted in Conſtantinople, and that I had read the account of it in the Gazette, I might perhaps have been as much inclined to laugh as he was; but that it was impoſſible for me to find any amuſement in ſeeing the king's authority ſo ſcandalouſly degraded." This was the caſe already, to ſuch a degree, that the ſpirit of revolt infected every claſs. The parliament, which had till then given an example of ſubmiſſion to his majeſty's orders, was loudly accuſed of having ſold itſelf to the court, and was in a manner compelled, by circumſtances, to infringe the interdiction againſt aſſembling.

The

The guard, which was placed at the Palais, having orders to let nobody enter, the magiſtrates choſe, as a place of meeting, the houſe of one of the preſidents, ſituated oppoſite to the intendant's hotel. The aſſembly met at five o'clock in the morning. As ſoon as M. de Thiard was informed of this, he ſent a detachment of the regiment of Rohan, and charged the officer who commanded to order the parliament, in the king's name, to ſeparate immediately. But the doors were barricadoed. After knocking ſeveral times, without being anſwered, the officer contented himſelf with keeping the houſe blockaded, as he had no orders to force it open. As ſoon as it was known in the town that the parliament was aſſembled and beſieged in the *Hotel de Cuillé*, the people gathered in crouds to protect the magiſtrates. A great many gentlemen came with their ſwords, and unfortunately their diſcourſe and their example encouraged the people to inſult the troops in the groſſeſt manner. The Procureur Général himſelf, who arrived at that moment, in his robes,

to join the aſſembly, had the imprudence to call the ſoldiers "vile ſatellites of deſpotiſm," and to threaten to deliver them up to the fury of the people. My advice had not been aſked in any of theſe meaſures. I did not underſtand what had occaſioned the tumult, nor the meaning of the clamours I heard while in my cloſet. At nine o'clock in the morning I received a note from M. de Thiard, in which he deſired me to go to him. I ſent him for anſwer, "that the mob was at my door, and that I could not go out, without expoſing myſelf to be maſſacred; that I did not think I ought to run ſuch a riſk without an abſolute neceſſity: it was therefore expedient we ſhould communicate by writing." He immediately wrote to me a ſecond note, in which he gave me to underſtand, that the king's ſervice abſolutely exacted of me to go to him as ſoon as poſſible, in order to conſult and determine upon the meaſures which were to be taken; and that he had ſent an eſcort to accompany me. This eſcort, compoſed of eight ſoldiers and an officer, was more fit to expoſe

expoſe me to obſervation, and conſequently to inſult, than to protect me againſt ſuch a croud of aſſailants, whom the known benignity of M. de Thiard's orders had taught to face the ſoldiers without fear, however great their number. In yielding to the requiſition of M. de Thiard, I thought it would be prudent to ſupply the want of proper protection by ſtratagem; I therefore made the eight ſoldiers be placed without the great gate of my houſe, as if they had been ſent there to defend the entry. I agreed with the officer that I ſhould go out by a little door, and as ſoon as he ſaw me paſs, he was to put himſelf in motion with the ſoldiers, and follow me at about the diſtance of forty paces. I alſo had the precaution not to appear in the black robe, or with long dreſſed hair, as I had hitherto always done. My ſtratagem ſucceeded perfectly at firſt. I paſſed within ten paces of the mob, without attracting any attention. They were entirely occupied by a detachment of dragoons, who came to ſupport the ſiege or blockade of the *Hotel de Cuillé*, and

who, inſtead of marching againſt the mob, whom they might have diſperſed in a twinkling, formally drew themſelves up according to the orders of M. de Thiard, and ſtood peaceable ſpectators in the walk which overlooks that part of the town. A few moments afterwards I met a dragoon, who, in galloping to join the detachment, chaced before him all the people that were in the ſtreet. Twenty-five dragoons, I am convinced, by a briſk charge, would have been ſufficient to put all the inhabitants of the town to flight.

When I arrived at the top of the ſtreet which leads to the commandant's hotel, I ſaw, at the gate, a mob, conſiſting of about two thouſand people, through which it was abſolutely neceſſary for me to paſs. I had not gone far into the ſtreet when I was diſcovered; and immediately there was a general ſhout of "*haro* * *ſur l'intendant*," accompanied with the moſt furious imprecations. I did not heſitate reſpecting the part

* The cry of *haro* is uſed by the populace of Britanny and Normandy, when they intend to inſult or attack any perſon.

I had

I had to take. To have retreated would have been as mean as unſafe; and it appeared to me, that my only reſource was to endeavour to overawe them by an intrepid countenance. I imperceptibly relaxed my pace, to give the officer, who followed me, time to come nearer me. I rejected his propoſal, however, of placing me in the midſt of the eſcort, directing him to continue to follow, but to keep nearer, and to order his men to walk firm and erect. I myſelf, in the mean time, continued my pace with as undaunted an air as I could aſſume, in ſpite of the cries of *haro*, which redoubled with violence as we approached. When we had got within ten paces of this mob, who were armed with ſticks and ſtones, I put my hands into my pockets, to make them believe that I was provided with piſtols. I advanced, fixing the boldeſt of them with a ſteady eye, and walked ſtraight forward betwixt the croud and the wall of the hotel, as if the ſtreet had been quite clear. It became ſo for me. At this critical moment the ſhouts ceaſed at once, as if

an order had been iſſued for that purpoſe, the croud opened to the right and left as I advanced, and I entered M. de Thiard's hotel without any one having dared to throw a ſtone at me, or to inſult me in any way.

I was hardly entered, when the cry of *haro* was renewed with freſh vigour, in ſpite of a body of fifty dragoons who ſtood at the gate, like ſo many equeſtrian ſtatues. They were looked upon ſo much in that light, that amongſt thoſe who ſurrounded them there were people bold enough to paſs under the horſes, and cut the girths of two or three ſaddles.

I found M. de Thiard calmly converſing with ſome officers, not knowing any thing of what paſſed at his gate, nor comprehending the meaning of the ſhouts he heard. I ſaid to him, with ſome heat, that he ought to know, better than me, the cauſe of the clamour; that it was the conſequence of a general inſurrection, which exiſted ſince ſix in the morning, and had been excited by a meaſure, in which, as he well knew, I had no part, ſince he had given orders without

ſaying

ſaying a word to me. He excuſed himſelf, by ſaying that he did not think it neceſſary to diſturb me, becauſe he had never doubted but that the parliament would ſeparate as ſoon as the troops arrived. He then conſulted me upon what was to be done. "That is what you ought to find in your inſtructions," ſaid I to him; "it is for you to conſider whether you will follow them or not. When you have decided upon that point, I will give you my advice upon the means of executing them."

"But you know," ſaid he, "what my inſtructions are."

"Yes, undoubtedly; but I am uncertain how far you intend to follow them."

"I wiſh the parliament to ſeparate," ſaid he.

"I am convinced you do," replied I; "but at preſent the queſtion is not, what you wiſh the parliament to do, but what you will do yourſelf. You have the means in your power of doing what you pleaſe."

"But what do *you* think ought to be done with reſpect to the parliament?" reſumed he.

"I think there is nothing to be done at preſent," anſwered I; "becauſe it is more than probable that the object of their aſſembling is already fulfilled; and if I was in your place, I would ſend orders immediately for the troops to withdraw."

"What, even before the parliament is ſeparated?"

"Yes, without doubt; unleſs you have ordered the troops to attend, merely by way of doing honour to the parliament, in a ſtate of diſobedience to the king's orders."

"I ordered the troops on purpoſe to make the aſſembly ſeparate," anſwered he.

"You ought, then," ſaid I, "to have ordered them to force the door, when it was refuſed to be opened, and even to pull down the houſe, if neceſſary."

"Oh, I know very well that you are always for the moſt violent means," ſaid he.

"No," replied I, "certainly I am not; for I think, on the contrary, that violent meaſures

meaſures ought never to be had reeourſe to, till every moderate remedy has been tried in vain; but I am for acting conſiſtently; and nothing can be more inconſiſtent and more hurtful than to exhibit powerful means, and then to act in a weak manner."

"It would be acting in a very weak manner," replied he, "to withdraw the troops at preſent; and I cannot ſee any inconveniency in their remaining for ſome time longer."

"You will decide as you pleaſe."

We were engaged in this converſation, when a deputation from the parliament was announced. M. de Thiard went into his drawing-room, and I remained in his chamber, from which I heard the Procureur-Général complain to him, in a very outrageous and indecent ſtile, of an inſult which he pretended to have received from the officer who commanded the dragoons. This officer, in conformity with the orders which he had received to admit nobody, had for ſome moments oppoſed the entrance of the deputies. The Procureur was deaf to all expoſtu-

expoſtulation. His colleagues in vain endeavoured to bring him to a more decent behaviour: he imperiouſly inſiſted on having juſtice done him againſt the officer, whom M. de Thiard had the complaiſance to order under arreſt.

The object of this deputation was to demand that the troops, which were ſtationed at the gate of the *Hotel de Cuillé*, ſhould be recalled, to put an end to the ſcandal and the diſorder which reſulted from that meaſure. Before he gave them any anſwer, M. de Thiard thought proper to come and conſult me, by which, without intending it, he did me a very ill office; for it confirmed them in the notion that I was the inſtigator of the meaſure I complained of. I told M. de Thiard that I had already adviſed him to do what was now demanded of him, and that I had not altered my opinion. He then conſented to the recall of the troops. He made it a condition, that the parliament ſhould ſeparate as ſoon as poſſible; but the deputies not being authorized to ſtipulate for the aſſembly, could only promiſe that

they would uſe their utmoſt efforts to prevail upon them to do ſo.

The aſſembly continued till five o'clock in the afternoon: at the ſame hour the proteſt, which the parliament had taken againſt the edicts lately regiſtered, was publiſhed, and diſtributed all over the town with great profuſion. We were at the ſame time informed, that there had been warm debates in the aſſembly, on this queſtion, Whether there were not grounds for decreeing, that the king's commiſſioners ſhould be taken into cuſtody* ? and it was carried in the negative, by a very ſmall majority.

In conſequence of this conduct, the parliament was immediately ſent into exile. The *lettres de cachet* were delivered, the following evening, againſt all the members, except M. du Couedic, who, having ſeen the preceding day that to elude the execution of the king's orders, all that was neceſſary was to ſhut himſelf up in his chamber, and keep it faſt locked, had recourſe to this expedient, and with nearly equal

* *Decretes de priſe de corps.*

ſucceſs,

ſucceſs, with the parliament; for having ſhut himſelf up, and refuſed admittance to the officer who came with the *lettre de cachet*, and threatened to ſhoot any perſon who dared to force open his door, M. de Thiard thought it ſufficient to place two ſentinels in his antichamber, who paſſed two days there; which did not prevent M. du Couedic making his eſcape out of the window, getting clear of the town, and traverſing the province, without having the king's order notified to him.

The ineffectual meaſure of exiling the parliament, ſo far from reſtoring tranquillity, only ſerved to irritate the public more and more, and to augment the fermentation. The meeting of the *Chambres de Lecture* were permanent. The moſt violent meaſures were the conſtant object of their deliberations. It was decreed, in one of theſe aſſemblies, that all the gentlemen of Rennes ſhould demand, in a body, ſatisfaction of M. d'Hervilly, colonel of the regiment of Rohan, for the inſult he was ſuppoſed to have offered to the nobility in the perſon

perſon of one of its members, againſt whom he was accuſed of having raiſed his cane. The fact was, that during the blockade of the *Hotel de Cuillé*, M. d'Hervilly, who was there with the detachment of his regiment, was brutally aſſaulted by ſome gentlemen, who, after having torn off his epaulets, puſhed him rudely againſt the wall; at that moment he ſuddenly raiſed his arm to defend his head; but he could not raiſe his arm, without alſo raiſing the cane which he held in his hand. It was this involuntary motion which was miſinterpreted as an inſulting geſture. M. d'Hervilly gave this explanation to a numerous deputation, who came to inform him of the intentions of the nobility. As his explanation did not ſatisfy them, he accepted, with gratitude, the honourable challenge that was propoſed to him; but he told theſe gentlemen, that he muſt limit its execution to three duels a day, upon account of the time he was obliged to beſtow on the king's ſervice. The manner in which the firſt duel paſſed very happily terminated this quarrel. M. d'Hervilly having

having given his adverſary his life three times, that gentleman rather choſe to embrace him, than to continue the combat; and the two others, who were to have fought M. d'Hervilly on the ſame day, declared themſelves ſatisfied; as did all the other gentlemen who were to have fought him afterwards.

This affair opened M. de Thiard's eyes to the danger of theſe aſſemblies which were held in town, and he conſulted me upon the means of putting a ſtop to them. My opinion was, that at the point to which things were arrived, ſucceſs could only be expected from the moſt vigorous meaſures; and that with reſpect to theſe aſſemblies, I ſaw no other means than to publiſh, and rigorouſly execute, a decree, by which all aſſemblies whatever were interdicted, under pain of a penalty of 3000 livres, of confiſcation, and the demolition of the houſe in which the aſſemblies ſhould be held. He at firſt approved of my advice, and begged of me to draw up the decree, and make it be printed and publiſhed. This was done in the

the courſe of the day; but the next morning he had changed his mind, upon hearing of M. d'Hervilly's reconciliation with the nobility, becauſe he looked upon the meaſure as quite unneceſſary; and in ſpite of my earneſt expoſtulations, he never could reſolve upon publiſhing this decree, the execution of which might probably have ſtopped the progreſs of the revolt and the general diſorder.

CHAP. V.

Progreſs of the inſurrection.—Inſolence of a Procureur du Roi.—*Repreſentations of the* commiſſion intermediaire * *of the ſtates. —Violent conduct of the archbiſhop of Sens. —Decrees of the council.—Tumults.—Weakneſs of M. de Thiard.—Deſigns formed againſt me—My departure for Paris.—Its conſequences.—M. de Thiard's recall.—Replaced by M. de Stainville.—Retreat of the archbiſhop of Sens—And of M. de Lamoignon.—Recall of Mr. Necker. —M. de Barentin appointed chancellor.—Mr. Necker prepares the convocation of the States General.—His motives.*

THE eſtabliſhment of the baillage at Rennes was become abſolutely impoſſible, from the contempt into which royal

* *Commiſſion intermediaire* was compoſed of a certain number of the deputies of the three orders, who, during the intervals of the ſittings of the States, were employed to execute ſome parts of the adminiſtration of that province.

authority

authority had fallen, from the proteſt of the parliament againſt the new laws, and from the inefficacy of all means of force in the hands of a commandant ſuch as M. de Thiard. My correſpondence with the miniſters, and principally with the archbiſhop of Sens, turned upon the neceſſity of qualifying his meaſures, of abandoning his miſerable *Cour Pleniere*, and, above all, of ſuſpending the execution of the new laws in Britanny, until ſuch time as they ſhould receive the approbation of the ſtates, according to the privileges of that province, and the engagement which the king renewed at every ſitting, never to make any attempt againſt them. The archbiſhop's anſwers were always laconic, and to a ridiculous height imperious; as for inſtance, "*The king will be obeyed.—The king knows how to make himſelf obeyed.—You will immediately receive ſuch orders as the circumſtances require.*" But a diſregard of ſubordination and the ſpirit of revolt were ſo rapid, and theſe orders were diſpatched ſo ſlowly, that we always received them about a fortnight

after the period in which they might have been of ſervice.

The enthuſiaſm of inſurrection had ſo heated every mind, and the diſorder and weakneſs of governmcnt were ſo apparent, that thoſe who, from motives of intereſt as well as duty, ought to have been its ſureſt ſupport, gloried in ſhewing themſelves the moſt eager in attacking it. Thus, while the *commiſſion intermediaire* addreſſed the moſt inſolent expoſtulations to the king againſt the new edicts, and while the Procureur Sindic of the ſtates travelled poſt over the municipalities of the province, to force them to take a proteſt againſt his majeſty's orders, under pain of incurring the cenſure of the ſtates and the parliament, the *Procureur du roi au preſidial* threatened to proſecute us if we did not ſet at liberty a ſeditious fellow, who had been taken up before the *Hotel de Cuillé*. This fellow was at the head of a mob, exciting the people againſt the ſoldiers. A piſtol and ammunition were found in his pockets. The Procureur inſiſted, that if the man was liable

liable to be tried, it belonged to him, and not to us, to proſecute him. M. de Thiard ſaw no impropriety in delivering up the fellow to the juriſdiction of the Procureur, in ſpite of my remonſtrances againſt ſuch a meaſure; and after a ſlight examination, this vagabond was ſet at liberty, as was to have been expected, amidſt the acclamations of the populace, who conducted him home in triumph. It was even thought neceſſary to give him a few louis d'ors, to prevent his raiſing a proceſs againſt us for damages, in which he would certainly have been ſucceſsful.

The archbiſhop of Sens, confident in the reſources of his own genius, and perſuaded that his meaſures would be crowned with ſucceſs, regarded the oppoſition in Britanny with contemptuous indifference; ſeeing that the greateſt number of the baillages were eſtabliſhed, and in activity, he thought that it would be in his power to reſtore that province to tranquillity when he pleaſed. He was, however, ſtung to the quick at the diſreſpectful ſtyle in which he and his meaſures

were mentioned in the repreſentations addreſſed to the king by the *commiſſion intermediaire;* and he revenged himſelf by ordering twelve gentlemen of Britanny to be taken up, and conducted to the Baſtille, ſeveral of whom had taken no part in the troubles which agitated that province. He ſent us, at the ſame time, a decree of the council, with a dull and tedious preamble, the object of which was, to refute the principal objections that were raiſed againſt the new laws. We were ordered to publiſh and circulate it in all the principal towns of the province, without delay; and this order was punctually executed. I told M. de Thiard, that I ſhould cauſe the decree to be poſted up next morning, but that we muſt expect to have it immediately torn down, unleſs there was a guard ſtationed by every placart; and that an inſurrection might very poſſibly be the conſequence. "We ſhall ſee," replied he, with great compoſure; and accordingly it was what we did ſee. The placarts, which were poſted up at four o'clock in the morning, were all taken down

down by the populace, an immenſe croud of whom had aſſembled for the purpoſe of making a bonfire with them in the court of my hotel; but thanks to the firmneſs of my porter, and the ſolidity of my gate, the bonfire was not allowed to be kindled within the court, but only in the ſtreet before the hotel; and I ſuſtained no other leſs than having a few of my windows broken by the ſtones thrown by the mob. I immediately diſpatched one of my clerks to M. de Thiard, to give him an account of what was paſſing; and about two hours after, when the mob was entirely diſperſed, he ſent me a few dragoons, and a guard of twenty men, whom I diſmiſſed immediately, being convinced that my ſhewing any ſymptom of fear, or that I thought myſelf in danger, would be an infallible way of bringing the danger on. The people were accuſtomed to ſee a number of troops at the hotel of the commandant, but never at that of the intendant. The novelty of this alone would have attracted a croud; and when that had become great, a few ſe-

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ditious fellows might have excited them to inſurrection.

The fermentation, occaſioned by the exile of the magiſtrates, was conſiderably augmented by the confinement of the twelve gentlemen; and the intelligence which was given me by the Sieur Tronjolly, *Procureur du Tribunal de Police*, prepared us to expect a very ſerious exploſion. The project of retaliating upon us for thoſe acts of deſpotiſm was publicly talked of; and I have no doubt but that the trifling inſurrection, occaſioned by the poſting up of the placarts, would have been more ſerious, had it been leſs ſudden, and if more time had been given for the inſtigators to make preparations. They expected a new opportunity, which they hoped to improve to more advantage; becauſe the ſeditious gained ſtrength daily by the acceſſion of crouds of vagabonds, who having ſuffered under, or fled from, the laſh of juſtice, flocked to Rennes from all quarters, ſome having been invited by the ſeditious, others attracted by the diſorders that reigned at that place.

M. de Thiard, who had received information of all that was going forward, added a hundred men to the guard of his hotel, and obliged me to paſs a night there. He earneſtly intreated me to remain with him till the end of our miſſion. This would certainly have been the ſafeſt plan; but the idea of taking refuge, and concealing myſelf, was ſo repugnant to my character, that I could not conſent to it. I returned to the Intendant's hotel next day, to which M. de Thiard ſent a guard of twenty men. I wrote, the ſame day, to the archbiſhop of Sens, and to the chancellor, informing them, that in the preſent ſituation of affairs, the execution of the new laws was impracticable in Britanny; that our preſence was ineffectual for the end propoſed, and could ſerve no purpoſe but to lower the king's authority, as it was not in our power to puniſh the inſults daily offered to us, neither could I ſecure myſelf from the danger which menaced me in particular; therefore I requeſted permiſſion to return; adding, that

I would wait for it, unleſs the danger became very urgent.

Eight days had elapſed without my receiving any anſwer to theſe letters, when I was informed, by the *Procureur du roi* of the police, that my hotel would be attacked by a conſiderable mob, made up of the greateſt vagabonds in Rennes; that they intended to enter by the garden wall, which was low enough for that purpoſe on the ſide next the ſtreet. Their deſign was to ſeize upon my perſon. The Procureur refuſed to mention the treatment which was intended me; he only adviſed me not to remain any longer at my hotel, as it was impoſſible to know how ſoon this attack would be made. On the ſame day, namely the ſeventh of July, I received the ſame advice from one Bouvard, who commanded the city guard at Rennes. I did not, however, follow it, but continued in the hotel; I only had the precaution to quit the chamber in which I uſually ſlept, as it was on a level with the garden, and I went to a ſmall apartment on the ſecond floor, where they would

would not probably have thought of ſeeking me, and from which I could more eaſily have made my eſcape, had I been reduced to that extremity.

I was not long of knowing that the intelligence I had received was but too well founded. On the eighth of July, about two o'clock in the morning, the guard ſtationed in my garden perceived two men, who had clambered over the wall; but theſe fellows, obſerving that they were diſcovered, had time to make their eſcape before the guard could come up with them; and they were ſeen running along the ſtreet with eight or ten of their companions, who had undoubtedly come to reconnoitre the ground. This attempt determined me to leave Rennes next day, although I had not received permiſſion, and although M. de Thiard offered to ſend me a more numerous guard. I anſwered him, that in order to re-eſtabliſh and maintain the king's authority, it was not ſufficient that we poſſeſſed the means of repelling ſuch attacks as theſe, but that we ought alſo to have the power

and

and the firmneſs to puniſh the authors with exemplary ſeverity; and that I could by no means conſent to remain expoſed to the danger of being attacked in my houſe, unleſs he would give poſitive and unlimited orders to the troops to repel force by force; and likewiſe give me his word of honour that he would deliver up every perſon, ſeized in the act of aſſault, to be tried in the courſe of law, and executed if condemned. This propoſal terrified him ſo much, that he thought it better for me to ſet off, and inform the miniſters of what was paſſing. I accordingly left Rennes ſecretly on the 9th of July, at three o'clock in the morning, accompanied by eight dragoons, who eſcorted me half a league out of town; and I arrived at Verſailles on the 11th, at five in the afternoon. I alighted at the archbiſhop of Sens's hotel. He was ſurpriſed to ſee me, and received me coldly enough. "You were in a great hurry to come," ſaid he. "Did not you receive my letter?"

"No, my lord."

"If

"If you had waited for it, you would then have known that it was the king's intention that you ſhould viſit the principal towns of the province, in order to judge of the general diſpoſition with reſpect to the new laws, and to give us an account of it. I confeſs," continued he, "that after the idea which M. de Montmorin gave me of your character, particularly of your firmneſs, I did not expect ſuch a falling off on your part. None of your colleagues have done the ſame in any part of the kingdom."

"None of them," I replied, "have found things in the ſame ſtate that I did. I ſhall only ſay, my lord, that I never was conſidered as faint-hearted; and you will find that I have not left that reputation in Britanny; and I would have been there ſtill, if my firmneſs alone could have anſwered any purpoſe. With reſpect to the journey which the king wiſhed me to take through the principal towns of the province, that is quite unneceſſary to the end of knowing the people's diſpoſitions. I am perfectly

perfectly well informed on that ſubject, by conſtant correſpondence with my delegates; and I can venture to aſſure you, that there will be no difficulty in eſtabliſhing the new laws all over the province, after they are received at Rennes, but not before."

"Yes, but at Rennes, things go on very ill; and the king is greatly diſſatisfied."

"I am very ſorry for it, but it is no fault of mine. I was very exact in declaring my opinion reſpecting what was likely to happen, and I mentioned what meaſures would have been moſt expedient during the exiſting circumſtances. I am convinced that what I propoſed would then have been effectual; but now it would be too late."

"You ſurely had troops in abundance?"

"A great deal too many. I never complained that we had not ſoldiers enough; deciſive orders were what we moſt ſtood in need of."

"What do you mean? Did not the king give a *carte blanche* to M. de Thiard?"

"He

" He never told me ſo. The inſtructions which I ſaw were not to that effect,"

" But what do you think ought to be done at preſent?"

" If it be the king's intentions to have the new laws put in execution, M. de Thiard ſhould receive poſitive inſtructions to that purpoſe, and be required, at the ſame time, to mention what means he thinks will be neceſſary to ſecure ſucceſs, and furniſh what he requires. But, above all, his inſtructions muſt be poſitive."

To this the archbiſhop anſwered, " It is not poſſible to foreſee every circumſtance. But, in ſhort, there can be no inconvenience in allowing a few days to paſs, till we ſee what effect your departure will produce. Go now to the chancellor, and return and ſee me as ſoon as you receive news from Britanny."

M. de Lamoignon received me ſtill worſe than the archbiſhop of Sens. He ſeverely reproached me for having ſent my reſignation, and for having left Rennes without having obtained the king's permiſſion. I completely

completely ſatisfied him with regard to the neceſſity of ſetting out, without waiting for leave; and with regard to my ſending my reſignation, I reminded him of what had paſſed between us before I left Paris, upon the impoſſibility of my accepting of any commiſſion that would oblige me to act againſt the parliament; and it was eaſy for me to prove to him, that my conduct was the neceſſary conſequence of the error I had been led into by his anſwer. I complained, in my turn, not of the reſerve, but of the diſſimulation with which I had been treated. "It appears to me," ſaid I to him, "that without initiating me in the ſecret of the projected meaſure, I might at leaſt have got a general hint that it concerned the magiſtracy and the adminiſtration of juſtice; if I had, I ſhould then have endeavoured to convince the archbiſhop of the danger of attempting ſuch a meaſure in Britanny, before the approaching convocation of the ſtates, and leaving it to their deciſion; as in this way alone could it be reconciled to the privileges of that province, all of which the king

king had engaged to maintain: and this was likewiſe the only way to ſecure the ſucceſs of the meaſure itſelf; whereas, the reſiſtance with which it would be met in Britanny, would give the example of oppoſition, and encourage the other provinces to reſiſt. The proper plans to have adopted," I added, "had been traced by M. de Maupeou, in a much more important and difficult enterprize. If they had adopted it, the reſult would have been the ſame in Britanny, by employing M. de Reverſeau to tranſact buſineſs with the parliament, inſtead of ſending him to the *Chambre des Comptes* at Nantes, where I could have more properly fulfilled the commiſſion with which he was charged."

"All this," replied M. de Lamoignon, "is like muſtard after dinner; and I am certain that the king will be very much aſtoniſhed and diſpleaſed, when he knows that you are here."

"If his majeſty," ſaid I, "were acquainted with my character, he would be, on the contrary, ſurpriſed at my ſupporting, during

ring two long months, the contradictions and diſguſts which I met with. I am good for nothing in ſuch a conjuncture; and I would give in my reſignation a thouſand times, rather than be placed in the ſame circumſtances again."

"I do not poſitively ſay," replied he, "that the king is determined upon your return to Britanny. We ſhall ſee. But you have brought yourſelf into a very diſagreeable ſituation."

"I could not avoid it: but that which I have quitted was the worſt of all ſituations."

"You are extremely obſtinate."

"Perhaps I am, ſir; and particularly when I think myſelf in the right, and have nothing to reproach myſelf with."

He then deſired that I ſhould immediately make out a circumſtantial ſtatement of the affairs in Britanny, which he would next day lay before the council; and ſo we ſeparated, mutually diſſatisfied with each other.

I drew up the ſtatement, as he deſired, and gave it him next morning. I found him

him rather ſoftened, becauſe M. de Montmorin, whom I had ſeen in the interval, had ſpoken to him in my favour, and had convinced him of the injuſtice of blaming me for the ill ſucceſs of their meaſures, ſince the only means which could have inſured it had not been under my direction. And ſurely it was no fault of mine that M. de Thiard only employed the troops in the defence of his hotel, and appeared to confine his whole care and attention to the ſingle object of ſecuring it from being taken by aſſault.

By the firſt meſſenger from Britanny intelligence was brought, "that on the very day which I left Rennes, a mob had aſſembled, and erected a gibbet before the hotel in which I had lodged; that upon this I had been hanged in effigy; and the figure repreſenting me was afterwards burned in a large bonfire made for the purpoſe. This ſame figure was previouſly covered with inſcriptions of the moſt inſolent and ſeditious nature. This ceremony had continued a conſiderable time, during which many

 execrations

execrations were uttered againſt the miniſter, as well as againſt M. de Thiard and myſelf, and no interruption was attempted by the troops or otherwiſe, nor was any meaſure adopted for arreſting the actors or inſtigators, though they were well known.

The weakneſs of M. de Thiard was ſuch, that the archbiſhop of Sens at laſt became ſenſible that there was an abſolute neceſſity for ſending a man more capable of commanding into Britanny. The Marechal de Stainville, who was then at Straſbourg, was ſent for. It was hardly poſſible to make a better choice. He arrived at Rennes with the ſame orders and the ſame powers which had been given to M. de Thiard, whom he went to replace. He had only paſſed two days there, when ſubordination and tranquillity were perfectly re-eſtabliſhed, without a ſhot being fired, or a blow ſtruck; becauſe it was known that the arms were charged, and that the troops had received orders, not only to repel force by force, but to fire upon the moſt inconſiderable

mob

mob who refuſed to diſperſe. So true it is, that in order to reſtrain the people, it is abſolutely neceſſary to appear not to fear them; and that a number of troops do not overawe the multitude ſo much as the known firmneſs of him who commands them.

But while order was beginning to be reſtored in Britanny, the archbiſhop of Sens entirely deſtroyed the king's authority all over the kingdom; ſometimes from his neglecting to employ it when it was neceſſary; and at other times, from his extravagant abuſe of it. At length, when the finances, and public credit, and every reſource were exhauſted, the general diſorder of the government forced him to abandon the miniſtry, and ſhamefully ſeek that aſylum in a foreign country which the public indignation did not permit him to find in his own.

The public mind was now turned to Mr. Necker, as the only man who was capable, by his ſuppoſed talents and virtues, of repairing the bad effects of the vices and incapacity of

the archbiſhop of Sens. Thus the king was reduced and condemned by public opinion, by the imperious cry of the nation, to recall to his council the inſolent miniſter whom he had, with ſo much ſatisfaction, ſent away.

To abandon the meaſures of the archbiſhop of Sens, and to recall the parliaments, were the firſt acts of Mr. Necker's adminiſtration. The retreat of M. de Lamoignon ſoon ſucceeded that of the principal miniſter; and M. de Barentin, then firſt preſident *de la Cour des Aides* of Paris, was named chancellor. Mr. Necker propoſed this gentleman, in the hopes of finding in him that blind and ſervile docility which the archbiſhop of Sens had found in M. de Lamoignon; but the conduct of M. de Barentin proved him to be a man of too much worth, and too much attached to the king, ever to be ſwayed by Mr. Necker, to neglect his duty to his majeſty, or to forget what he owed to his own character.

The archbiſhop of Sens had unfortunately prevailed upon the king to come under

under the moſt ſolemn engagement to convene the States General in 1789; and as a completion of folly, he iſſued a decree of the council, authorizing, and even inviting, all who thought themſelves capable of publiſhing, for the inſtruction of the government, their ideas on the beſt form of convoking the States General, the manner in which the aſſembly ſhould be compoſed, and the objects they ſhould take into conſideration; as if there never had been an aſſembly of the States in France before, or rather, as if the motive of their convocation had been to eſtabliſh an entire new form of government. And, in effect, this was the aim of the greateſt part of thoſe pamphlets with which France at this time overflowed.

It might have eaſily been foreſeen, that an aſſembly of the States General, convened in that ſtate of enthuſiaſm and convulſion, ſo far from producing any good effect, would neceſſarily expoſe the monarchy and the king to the moſt imminent danger. It is impoſſible to ſuppoſe that Mr. Necker did not foreſee theſe conſequences, without ſup-

poſing him uncommonly deficient in point of diſcernment: and if, foreſeeing them, he reſolved to meet them, he acted with the preſumption of a madman, or the perfidy of a traitor. Had his intentions been upright, and had he poſſeſſed the one half of the talents which his flatterers imputed to him, the re-eſtabliſhment of the finances would, as he ſaid himſelf, have been a mere amuſement to him, without the aſſiſtance of the States General. The enthuſiaſtic confidence of the public, in his talents and probity, gave him the power of deferring the convocation as long as he pleaſed. But more ambitious of power, than ſenſible to the glory of enſuring the ſafety of the ſtate, the only advantage which he endeavoured to derive from the circumſtance was to fix his popularity on ſo firm a baſis, as would confirm him in adminiſtration, independent of the intrigues of the court, and even in ſpite of the will of the king. His credulous vanity led him to believe that he ſhould become the perpetual miniſter of the nation, by the great addition of character he would acquire

acquire in the diſplay of his talents before the States General; and this chimera made him haſten the convocation.

In this manner Mr. Necker became one of the firſt ſprings of that revolution, of which he was ſoon to be the ſhameful victim.

CHAP. VI.

Remarkable determination of the municipality of Rennes.—Repreſentations upon the neceſſity of annulling it.—The other municipalities of the province imitate that of Rennes.—I give in my reſignation.—Opening of the States of Britanny.—Inſurrection againſt the nobility.—Separation of the States.—Opening of the States General.—Propoſal of the club Breton, to Mr. Necker, rejected.—Debates upon the verification of rights.—Motives for diſſolving the States General.—Plan propoſed for this purpoſe approved of, but not followed.—Declaration of the 23d of June.

THE States of Britanny were to be aſſembled at the end of the month of December 1788; and from the diſſenſions which ſtill continued to agitate the province, it was eaſy to foreſee that this aſſembly would be turbulent, unleſs the government diſplayed uncommon energy, and

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ſent another commandant than M. de Thiard. With reſpect to myſelf, I was determined againſt going, becauſe it appeared to me prejudicial to the king's authority, and unbecoming my character, to return to Rennes, before public reparation was made for the inſults I had received there; and alſo becauſe Mr. Necker knew that on the firſt year of my intendant of Britanny, I had prompted the attorney-general to denounce to the parliament his book upon finance. I could not, therefore, expect to obtain from him that unlimited confidence, without which an intendant cannot do much good in his province, however high his abilities and upright his intentions may be.

In hopes that the government would come to a definite reſolution relative to M. de Thiard and myſelf, I continued to fulfil the duties of my office with as much aſſiduity as if I had no idea of quitting it. At this time the municipality of Rennes came to a reſolution, by which its deputies to the States of Britanny were interdicted from

from deliberating upon the demands of the king, or on any affair whatever, until the third order had obtained juſtice from the two other orders, upon the affair of the extraordinary *fouages* *, which had been brought on the tapis at the preceding meeting of the States, and had occaſioned the moſt violent debates.

But in proportion as the reclamation of the third order was juſt, the municipality of Rennes was inexcuſable, in ſupporting it by means ſo irregular and ſo imperious; for the determination which had been iſſued

* The ordinary *fouages* were amongſt the moſt ancient taxes impoſed on the lands of peaſants in Britanny, at a certain rate for each fire-place exiſting when this impoſition was fixed; but all additional fire-places, eſtabliſhed poſterior to the firſt impoſition, were to be free from this tax. The extraordinary *fouages* were different, being originally a loan exacted from thoſe very peaſants by the States of the province, for the general expences of the province, on the expreſs condition that the ſum advanced was to be repaid, with the intereſt, at the end of the year. But this condition, inſtead of being adhered to, was quite neglected; and the ſame loan was renewed and exacted, by the authority of the States, at every following ſitting, and in time became a permanent tax, under the name of *fouages extraordinaires*, without any formal law.

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out could have no other effect than that of irritating the nobility, and raiſing the people to inſurrection againſt them. The day on which I received this determination from Rennes, I ſhewed Mr. Necker the plan of a decree of the council, by which the determination of the municipality ſhould be annulled, and all the other municipalities of the kingdom ſhould be interdicted from making ſuch decrees, under pain of being diſſolved. I inſiſted, in the moſt earneſt manner, upon the neceſſity of ſending this decree immediately to Rennes by a courier extraordinary, as a means to prevent the approaching opening of the States from becoming the commencement of a civil war. Mr. Necker anſwered, with the greateſt coolneſs, that he could not take upon him to adopt a meaſure of ſuch importance, without the approbation of the king and the miniſters; and that he would ſpeak of it at the committee which was to be held that evening. I returned to his houſe next day, and found that he had ſet out for Paris, without having given any orders in his office relative to the

the propoſed decree of the council. He was to return to Verſailles to dinner, and I waited for him, in vain, till ſeven o'clock in the evening. I engaged M. de Thiard, who was of the Aſſembly of Notables, to watch the moments of Mr. Necker's return, and to join his intreaties to mine. I put into his hands a memorial upon this affair, and a letter for Mr. Necker, whom I went to Paris in ſearch of. I found him ſetting out for Verſailles, and I followed him back, but without being able to ſee him on my arrival at Verſailles. Five days elapſed, and neither M. de Thiard nor me could obtain a definitive anſwer. I then wrote to him, that the decree of the council, which I had propoſed, would now be ineffectual, as time had been given for the municipalities of the province to iſſue out determinations of the ſame kind with that of the municipality of Rennes, which I did not doubt of their having done; and therefore the proper meaſure now would be to make a new decree of the council, for annulling, not only the determination of the

municipality of Rennes, but the determinations of all the municipalities of Britanny that had the ſame tendency. Mr. Necker did not anſwer this letter; and I learnt at his office, that my fears appeared to him groundleſs, and the meaſures I propoſed much too violent.

Some time after, the report of my intention to reſign being ſpread in the province, ſeveral municipalities ſent deputies to Paris, who were commiſſioned to do every thing in their power to diſſuade me from that ſtep, and to uſe their influence with the miniſters not to accept my reſignation, if I ſhould give it in. This deputation, which, in other circumſtances, would have been extremely flattering to me, now rendered my reſignation indiſpenſable; becauſe it was known that the repreſentations made to the king, on the injuſtice of the *fouages extraordinaires*, went originally from me, and I was conſidered as the chief promoter of the oppoſition made by the Tiers to that tax; of courſe it might have ſuppoſed, when I ſet off for Britanny, that I intended to put myſelf

ſelf at the head of the third order, in oppoſition to that of the nobility: and as ſuch a conduct would not have been in any reſpect ſuitable for me, I did not chooſe to be ſuſpected of it; therefore I gave in my reſignation the ſixth of December 1788, and M. du Faure de Rochefort was named to my place.

The States of Britanny were now to be opened. All the municipalities of the province had given their deputies a poſitive order to take no part in any deliberation, until the affair of the extraordinary *fouages* was terminated; and they were alſo commiſſioned to exact, as a preliminary condition to every arrangement, the total reſtitution, capital and intereſt, of the amount of all the contributions paid ſince the year 1641, under the title of *fouages extraordinaires*, which would have amounted to at leaſt forty millions of livres, to be reſtored to contributors. In a court of equity, this could not have occaſioned any heſitation. The council appeared to give a tacit approbation to theſe determinations and

mandates, by refuſing to pronounce their repeal. The third order, therefore, naturally imagining that the court would ſupport their pretenſions, prepared to inſiſt upon them with renewed firmneſs. The imprudent conduct of the nobility, in theſe critical circumſtances, completed the general diſguſt. The Count of Boiſgelin, who was to preſide, arrived at Rennes two days before the opening of the States. He aſſembled, at his houſe, all the nobility who came to Rennes upon the occaſion, and made this irregular aſſembly adopt the reſolution of paying no attention to the particular demands of the third order, until the general affairs of the province were terminated.

The diſcontent which this deciſion excited was a prelude to the tragical cataſtrophe which was to ſignalize the opening of the States. From the ſecond ſitting, the moſt violent animoſity appeared betwixt the order of the nobility and the third order. Tumult and inſurrection were the conſequences. It was not to be expected that M. de Thiard, who could not repreſs ſedition

ſedition when he commanded an army of more than three thouſand men, would be able to maintain order and obedience when he had only twenty or thirty *marechauſſée* at his command. He could not even prevent the nobility from being beſieged by the populace, for three days and two nights, in the hall of the States. At length, quite exhauſted with hunger and fatigue, they came out on the third day, with their ſwords drawn, to force their way through the mob. Upon this occaſion, a gentleman was killed by the firing of a piſtol, and another was dangerouſly wounded.

It was known, two days after, that 400 young men had come armed, from Nantes, to the aſſiſtance of the citizens of Rennes. M. de Thiard ſent the captain of his guard to meet them, in order to aſſure them that tranquillity was re-eſtabliſhed; and as their preſence could only breed tumult, he ordered them, in the king's name, to return to Nantes. But this did not prevent them from continuing their journey; and they arrived that very day at Rennes, where they

they were well received. In this ſtate of affairs, it was impoſſible to continue the aſſembly: almoſt all the nobility had left Rennes, and M. de Thiard received orders to put an end to the meeting of the States.

I was then at Paris, far from theſe ſtorms, which I had but too well foreſeen; and I had many apprehenſions, on account of the danger which threatened the kingdom at the approaching meeting of the States General, eſpecially as they were to be conſtituted according to the new form, which Mr. Necker had perſuaded the king to adopt. I was ſo much convinced that nothing but evil could be the reſult, that, to avoid the odium of having had any ſhare in it, I abſented myſelf from the electoral aſſembly of my ſection at Paris.

I had beſtowed great pains in ſtudying all that concerns the States General, in the moſt authentic monuments of our hiſtory, and had made a collection of notes and remarks upon that important point of our conſtitution. I gave an extract of theſe to

Mr. Necker; but as he did not among them find what he wanted, namely, ſome authority or precedent for doubling the number of the deputies of the Tiers in the aſſembly of the States, he made no uſe of the materials with which I furniſhed him.

Some days after the opening of the States General, the deſire I had to know the particulars of what was paſſing carried me to Verſailles. I was accoſted, in the ſtreet, by three deputies of the commons of Britanny. They expreſſed much regret that they had not been able to find me ſooner, and requeſted a rendezvous, to confer with me upon very important matters. It was then about ſeven o'clock at night, and I propoſed to accompany them to their lodgings. They agreed to this propoſal ſo much the more willingly, as they expected, that evening, ſome of their colleagues, members of the club Breton, from which was formed, in a ſhort time, the celebrated Jacobin club. I accordingly went with them to their inn, where our company was ſoon

increaſed by the addition of ſeven or eight perſons, amongſt whom were four deputies, whom I had known in Britanny.

After I had been introduced to thoſe who were ſtrangers to me, Champeaux Paſlane, deputy from St. Brieux, told me, that ſince their arrival, he and his colleagues had been extremely ſolicitous to ſee me, in order to take my opinion upon the conduct which they ought to maintain. "We are here," ſaid he, "as if we had fallen from the clouds, in an unknown country, where an order of things exiſts, of which we had no idea. We are unacquainted with the court and the miniſters, we know not what they deſire of us, and we hope that you will direct us. You know our reliance upon you, and you may believe that we ſhall pay the ſame regard to your advice here that we had in Britanny." They all united in the ſame requeſt, accompanied with the ſame aſſurances. I inquired what were their ſentiments, and in what way they expected me to direct them. They aſſured me, that their intention was to do all

in their power to eſtabliſh the king's authority in ſuch a manner, that the nobility and parliament might never have the power of injuring it. I greatly approved of theſe ſentiments; but I obſerved, that as I was not in the miniſtry, I could not take upon me to direct them; that it was to Mr. Necker to whom they ought to addreſs themſelves; and that I would ſpeak to him, if they authorized me. They anſwered, that they were not fond of going to Mr. Necker, becauſe there was always a croud at his houſe; and that if they were ſeen often with him, they would be ſuſpected of being ſold to the court: but that if I would be their interpreter with Mr. Necker, and tranſmit them his inſtructions, they would always ſtrictly conform to them. I promiſed to wait upon Mr. Necker next day, and to bring to them his anſwer. They then conſulted me upon the choice of their preſident; and they knew ſo little of the court, that they had determined to chooſe the Duke of Orleans, from the idea that they could not make a choice more agreeable

able to the king. I convinced them of their error; and M. Bailly was named preſident.

I went next day to inform Mr. Necker of the diſpoſition of theſe deputies; but not being able to ſee him, I deſired M. Coſter, his firſt ſecretary, to acquaint him with my buſineſs. When I went, next day, to receive Mr. Necker's anſwer, M. Coſter told me that the miniſter declined all private communication with thoſe deputies, as repugnant to the purity of his principles, ſince it might be conſidered as tampering with them, or a ſpecies of corruption. Some days after, Mr. Necker renewed an offer, which had been formerly made to me by Meſſrs. Barentin and de Montmorin, and which I had refuſed, of the place of firſt preſident of the *grand conſeil* at Paris, as an indemniſication for the loſs of the intendance of Britanny. He added, that the king had commiſſioned him to renew this propoſal, and was ſo deſirous that I ſhould accept of it, that he left it in my power to propoſe my own conditions with regard to

the appointments. I perſiſted in my refuſal, upon account of the uncertainty of every place annexed to adminiſtration, till after the cloſe of the States General. Irritated by this anſwer, Mr. Necker ſaid to me, with great haughtineſs and ſeverity of manner, "You ſeem, ſir, not to be very deſirous to pleaſe the king, or to ſerve him."

"The king, ſir," anſwered I, ſmiling, "does not think of me, and does not know in what I can be moſt uſeful to him."

"I have delivered to you, ſir," rejoined Mr. Necker, with an air of authority, "what his majeſty gave me in charge; you may perhaps receive, hereafter, his expreſs orders to the ſame purpoſe."

"How, ſir? Expreſs orders to accept the place of firſt preſident of the *grand conſeil?*"

"Why not?"

"Becauſe I never heard before of a man's being commanded to accept of a ſituation that he did not like as an indemnification or reward; and I am convinced that

that the king is the laſt perſon on earth to impoſe ſuch a hardſhip. Nevertheleſs, if I ſhould receive ſuch an order, I will find means to tranſmit to his majeſty my motives for refuſal."

I now perceived that he was a good deal diſturbed, therefore took my leave, and I never ſaw the great Mr. Necker ſince.

The manner in which the States General were conſtituted, and the ſpirit of diſorder which was manifeſt a few days after the opening, but too plainly ſhewed what was to be expected from ſuch an aſſembly, if it was not firmly maintained within proper limits; or rather, if advantage was not taken of the firſt favourable opportunity to diſſolve it. This laſt meaſure was the ſureſt, and alſo the eaſieſt, as it only exacted a moment's firmneſs. I propoſed it, in a memorial which I tranſmitted to M. de Montmorin, at a time when it could have been executed, not only without exciting commotion, but to the great ſatisfaction of all the kingdom; and this was at the time when

there was a general outcry againſt the aſſembly, upon account of the length and indecency of the debates which had ariſen, relative to the form of the verification of rights. This queſtion had conſumed the whole time of the ſittings, for almoſt ſix weeks, and only ſerved to irritate the Tiers Etat againſt the two other orders. Theſe debates might have been prevented, had Mr. Necker better underſtood our conſtitutional laws, or had he been even directed by common ſenſe. It certainly belonged to the king, who convened the aſſembly of the nation, to verify whether the letters of credit or mandates, of thoſe who claimed the title of deputies, were or were not regular. But the meaſure, of leaving this important point to the deciſion of the aſſembly, having been already adopted, it would have been fortunate if the miniſtry had known, or rather had they been willing to take advantage of the conduct of the aſſembly, in conſequence of its being left to themſelves. The means of doing this I

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laid open, in the memorial which I gave to M. Montmorin, the ſubſtance of which follows:

"If it is wiſhed to ſave the monarchy, and to prevent the total deſtruction of the government, not a moment muſt be loſt. It is not yet too late, and the means are in our conſtitution; for it will be there found, firſt, that the buſineſs and powers of the States General have always been limited to two points: the one, to unite all the inſtructions, demands, and grievances, of the particular bailliwicks, into one great addreſs, and to preſent it to the king, who, with the aſſiſtance of his council, decides upon it as he thinks proper; the other is by a general aſſembly of the whole, or by each order aſſembling ſeparately, to vote or give their conſent to ſuch contributions as are neceſſary for the ſtate.

"Secondly, The king retains the power of diſſolving the States General, whenever he thinks proper.

"The king and preſent aſſembly find themſelves in a poſition, of which there is no

no precedent in our hiſtory; for the inſtructions of all the bailliwicks are printed, ſo that the king may himſelf pick out the complaints and demands from the majority of the inſtructions, and, after mature examination in his council, decide upon them, without waiting till the great addreſs is preſented by the States General, who would have had full time to draw it up, if they had not employed themſelves for a month in frivolous and obſtinate debates upon mere matters of form, of which no one can ſee the end, and which delay the advantages that the nation expects to reap from the aſſembling of the States General.

"The eagerneſs for realizing theſe expected advantages is more than a ſufficient motive to determine the king to carry to the aſſembly, as ſoon as poſſible, firſt, An edict or declaration, by which his majeſty ſhall pronounce his opinion upon all the demands which are contained in the majority of the inſtructions, and grant ſuch of them as are proper.

"Secondly,

"Secondly, An exact ſtatement of the national debt, with a detailed account of the uſual expences of the government; not compriſing the houſehold of the king, queen, and princes, which his majeſty ought to announce he will provide for by the revenue of the domains of the crown, in which are included the produce of the poſts, which are farmed. This meaſure, which at any time would be uſeful, will be particularly ſo at the preſent moment, as it will withdraw the king's expences from the examination and cenſure of the States General; and leave them no pretext for not voting, immediately, contributions proportionable to the exigencies of the ſtate.

"Thirdly, A plan of finance, containing ſeveral modes of taxation, with an eſtimate of what each is likely to produce, to enable the aſſembly to appreciate and adopt thoſe which they imagine will be leaſt burdenſome.

"Fourthly,

" Fourthly, An account of the penſions, ſalaries, and perquiſites, marking the reduction of which they are ſuſceptible.

" After having read all theſe papers, the king may terminate the ſeſſion by the following ſpeech :

" ' That which I have now done for the relief of my people, and for the improvement of the government of my kingdom, fulfils, as much as the circumſtances will admit of, the wiſhes and demands which you are inſtructed to expreſs to me. There remains, then, nothing more for you to do than to accompliſh the laſt part of your inſtructions, by voting the taxes ; the neceſſity of which will be proved to you by the papers which have now been read.

" ' This demand, which all your inſtructions authorize me to regard as already conſented to by your conſtituents, ought to be the immediate and only object of your next meeting, which ought to be the laſt. I hope you will ſhew yourſelves the worthy repreſentatives of the French nation, by imitating,

imitating, upon this occaſion, the example of promptitude, which all the aſſemblies of the States General, which have preceded you, have always ſhewn. And I charge the preſidents of the orders to announce to me, to-morrow, the reſult of the deliberation which you are to enter into; and I will inform you, the day after, of the definitive meaſures which the welfare of the ſtate makes it my duty to adopt.'

"The king, upon the following day, may diſſolve the States General, whether they grant or refuſe the taxes. In the firſt caſe, it is done of courſe. In the ſecond caſe, the king muſt declare, that the fermentation and party ſpirit, which have never ceaſed to agitate the minds of the aſſembly, from the moment of their meeting, had prevented thoſe beneſits being derived which he and the nation had a right to expect; and that his majeſty had reſolved to diſſolve this aſſembly, and either to convoke another, or to conſult the aſſemblies of the bailliwicks upon the mode of taxation; and

and that until their inclinations upon this important ſubject are known, the exiſting taxes ſhall continue."

M. de Montmorin approved of this plan, and told me that he would ſpeak of it to Mr. Necker, in the courſe of the day. To this I anſwered, that he might as well throw my memorial into the fire, as I was very certain that Mr. Necker would never adopt it. I expreſſed a deſire, therefore, that he would rather tranſmit it to the king, or cauſe it to be read in council.

"This could anſwer no purpoſe," ſaid he; "for as ſoon as I ſhould begin to read your memorial in the council, Mr. Necker would ſtop me, and deſire to have it communicated to himſelf before it was read; on which the king would order it to be delivered to him. But leave this to me, and I will ſpeak to him in ſuch a manner as will induce him to take your plan into conſideration; and I ſhall take the ſame opportunity of prevailing upon him finally to fix your proviſional appointments."

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I was convinced that he would neither ſucceed in the one nor the other, and I continued to urge him to tranſmit my memorial to the king; but he perſiſted in aſſerting that this could have no effect, for the reaſons he had already given.

I was ſurprized, on receiving a letter, next day, from Mr. Necker, informing me, that the king had granted me an appointment of 12,000 livres a year, to begin from the day I reſigned, and to be continued until I was named to another ſituation. I at firſt imagined that this favour, ſo ſoon granted, and at the very moment in which my memorial was tranſmitted to Mr. Necker, was partly beſtowed as a recompence; and I concluded that the plan I had propoſed was adopted. I immediately went to M. de Montmorin, to know whether it was ſo. He told me that Mr. Necker had read my memorial with attention; that he was pleaſed with it, and approved of the principal ideas; but that he thought this was not the preciſe moment for putting it in execution.

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Eight days elapſed, without the court's having taken any decided part. It was at this time that the third order, having aſſembled in the tennis-court, declared themſelves to be the *National Aſſembly*.

Upon this occaſion, I wrote again to M. de Montmorin, ſhewing of what importance it was to take advantage of this new attempt againſt the conſtitution, and to employ it as a motive for diſſolving the States. "Make yourſelf eaſy," ſaid M. de Montmorin to me; "Mr. Necker does not ſleep, as you will be convinced; and in a few days you will be ſatisfied. I cannot tell you more."

This myſtery referred to the famous "ſeance" of the 23d of June, which was more fatal than uſeful in its conſequences, by the inſolent and perfidious abſence of Mr. Necker.

CHAP. VII.

MR. NECKER *.

Agioteur adroit, miniſtre ſans moyen
De rien il fit de l'or, et d'un empire rien.

CT. DE V——.

MR. NECKER, from a common clerk to a banker at Geneva, at a ſalary of 600 livres a-year, having become, in a ſhort time, a man of large fortune, a man of letters, and miniſter of the finance, is certainly no inconſiderable perſonage. Conſidered in the two firſt characters, he might only have intereſted bankers and literary men; but conſidered as a ſtateſman, he is connected with events of too much importance for any of the particulars of his adminiſtra-

* In order to give a juſt idea of this man, as famous for the evil he has done to France, as remarkable on account of the kind of idolatry, of which he was the object, I have thought proper to bring together, in one chapter, the principal facts which relate to him, ſeparated from the hiſtorical details in which he has no concern.

tion to be foreign to the hiſtory of our diſaſters.

Mr. Theluſſon, a banker at Paris, having requeſted his correſpondent at Geneva to find out for him an intelligent clerk, to keep his caſh-books, that correſpondent, who was the banker with whom young Necker was then ſerving his apprenticeſhip, ſent him to Paris, where Mr. Theluſſon appointed him his deputy caſhier, with a ſalary of 1200 livres a-year. He ſoon afterwards became principal caſhier, and gained the entire confidence of Mr. Theluſſon, who, in gratitude for ſome advantageous operations in exchange, which he had ſuggeſted, conſented to take him in as a partner in his houſe.

Mr. Necker, taking advantage of the embarraſſment of the royal treaſury, at the beginning of the Abbé Terray's adminiſtration, made ſuch good uſe of the capital of his patron, and of the company, that his ſhare of thoſe profits, manifeſtly uſurious, was immenſe.

Such

Such was the origin of his fortune, which he augmented very much at the time of the meetings of thoſe who had claims on the old Eaſt India Company, upon whom he had the addreſs to impoſe by manœuvres more lucrative than honourable; for which he has been ſince bitterly reproached by M. Panchot, who was perfectly acquainted with that tranſaction, and who was one of the ableſt calculators in France.

Mr. Necker's fooliſh and enthuſiaſtic admirers have never ceaſed extolling his rare talents for finance; but how can we believe in them, when we conſider the enormous blunders he committed in his loans, the exorbitant intereſt of annuities upon many lives, the exceſſive quantities of reimburſements at fixed periods and at too ſhort intervals, and, above all, the falſe and abſurd combination of the laſt loan of his firſt adminiſtration, two thirds of which remained, without value, amongſt the refuſe of the royal treaſury, till M. Calonne, more ſkilful in the management of public credit,

revived, and made an advantageous uſe of it.

As for the pretended œconomy of Mr. Necker, M. Bourgade, in an excellent memorial ſent to M. de Maurepas, has plainly demonſtrated the empirical illuſion of it, and made it appear, that the retrenchments, ordered by Mr. Necker with that revolting harſhneſs of which he made an oſtentatious diſplay, only produced inconſiderable ſavings; and, by deſtroying public confidence, had done more harm than good.

Mr. Necker owed his nomination to the place of director of the royal treaſury to an intrigue which he ſet on foot againſt M. de Clugny, at that time comptroller-general.

Mr. Necker had framed a memorial, to prove that the one preſented to the king by that miniſter, the import of which alarmed M. de Maurepas, was built on falſe foundations and incorrect calculations. He there affirmed, that with more ability it would be eaſy to remedy every thing, and to make

up

up the acknowledged deficit; he pointed out the means, and reſerved the developement of them till he ſhould be put into a ſituation to do it with effect. M. de Pezay, who enjoyed great credit with M. de Maurepas, and who (as it is ſaid) ſold the influence which he had with that miniſter at a very high price to the perſons who applied to him, undertook to preſent this memorial, and to ſupport it with his whole credit.

M. de Maurepas, who ſtudied nothing but his own tranquillity, readily gave faith to the deluſive promiſes of a man, who aſſured him that affairs were in a very good condition. On the death of M. Clugny, therefore, M. de Maurepas did not heſitate to intruſt to Mr. Necker the direction of the royal treaſury, and to appoint M. Taboureau comptroller-general.

Mr. Necker's vanity was ſoon afterwards wounded by the inferiority to which the place of *directeur des finances* was reduced, by its being deprived of the honour of direct communication with the king. As

ſoon as he thought that he had made ſufficient progreſs in the confidence of M. de Maurepas, and flattered himſelf with the hopes of his ſupport, he found the means of exciting a financial controverſy betwixt M. Taboureau and himſelf. The altercation became ſo violent, that a reconciliation betwixt them was no longer poſſible. M. de Maurepas was very much embarraſſed what conduct he ſhould adopt; but on letting it appear that he was inclined in favour of Mr. Necker, M. Taboureau, who had accepted of his office with reluctance, did not heſitate to give in his reſignation. The firſt operation of Mr. Necker, on his becoming director-general of the finance, by the reſignation of M. Taboureau, was to ſuppreſs the places of intendants of the finance, filled by old and diſtinguiſhed members of the king's council, who, under the direction of the comptroller-general, ſuperintended ſome of the moſt important parts of that department. The ſuppreſſion of thoſe places could not be attended with any ſaving, becauſe the appointments of thoſe

thoſe who held them conſiſted almoſt entirely in the intereſt of the price which they had paid for their offices, and which it was neceſſary to reimburſe on their diſmiſſion. It was preſumed, therefore, that Mr. Necker was not ſo much actuated, on this occaſion, by the real intereſt of the ſtate, as by his own vanity, which he felt wounded, not only by the ſuperiority of thoſe perſons of rank, but alſo by the ſuperior talents of ſome of them.

The chief direction of the finances did not long ſatisfy his ambition. It was not ſufficient for him to be preciſely what his predeceſſors had been; for whether it was from whim or from vanity, one of the moſt remarkable traits in his character was a continual affectation of being different, in the whole of his conduct and diſcourſe, from the reſt of mankind.

The admiration excited by his famous *Compte Rendu*, in ſpite of the errors and falſehoods it contained, had greatly increaſed his uſual ſtock of vanity. His pretending to provide for the expenſes of a war, with-

out impoſing new taxes, although the attempt proved as ruinous to the country as it was abſurd in itſelf, ſwelled his preſumption to ſuch a degree, that he thought the place of director-general of the finances beneath him, unleſs he was alſo admitted into the council of ſtate. He thought his talents ſo indiſpenſably neceſſary, and his credit ſo high, that the king would deviate from the eſtabliſhed rules ſo far as to diſpenſe, in his particular caſe, with the oath which all other miniſters were obliged to take, before they could be admitted into the cabinet, and which he, as a proteſtant, could not take.

Having communicated theſe ſentiments to M. de Maurepas, that miniſter told him that it would be better to make his application upon that ſubject to the king by a letter, which he would undertake to deliver to his majeſty. This he did, in the intention, as has been generally imagined, to influence the mind of the king againſt ſo very extraordinary a requeſt.

Mr. Necker was the more ardent in carrying this point, becauſe he thought it abſolutely

ſolutely neceſſary to remove the prejudice and the ridicule which had been raiſed againſt him by a multitude of pamphlets, and principally, by the letter addreſſed to d'Allembert, in the name of Carraccioli, which was in every body's hands.

No anſwer having been ſent to Mr. Necker's letter for two days, he was ſo much irritated, that he carried his reſignation to the queen, informing her majeſty, that if a place in the cabinet was refuſed him, it was not in his power to do any further good. The queen, to his great aſtoniſhment, received his reſignation without any mark of concern, only aſſuring him that ſhe would deliver it to the king. On the following day, a new miniſter of finance was appointed.

The pride, hypocriſy, and violence of Mr. Necker, and his ridiculous rage againſt all the pamphlets of which he was the ſubject, were very plainly manifeſted, in a truly curious converſation which he had with the Comte de Vaudreuil, at the commencement of his firſt adminiſtration; of which

which converſation the following is the ſubſtance, as it was communicated to me by the Comte de Vaudreuil himſelf.

" Three months after the nomination of Mr. Necker to the place of director-general of the finance, M. de Vaudreuil went to ſpeak to him on an affair which regarded one of his relations. He was received with politeneſs, and even with kindneſs. After having finiſhed his buſineſs, as he was about to retire, Mr. Necker expreſſed a deſire to converſe with him a few minutes. He began with an eulogium on the king's virtues, and on his application to buſineſs. This was followed by another on the queen. When thoſe topics were exhauſted, he began to ſpeak of himſelf, of his labours, his vigilance, of the conſtant obſtacles which he met with in the painful career of his adminiſtration. He complained, with bitterneſs, of the attacks of envy, and of the libels which were ſcattered abroad againſt him.

" The Count replied, ' that all perſons in eminent ſituations, and of great reputation, were

were expoſed to that misfortune; but it was to be hoped that he would annihilate envy by the goodneſs of his meaſures.'

" ' I agree with you,' ſaid Mr. Necker; ' but a mind of ſuch ſenſibility as mine can with difficulty ſupport ſo much injuſtice; for amongſt many contemptible libels, there are ſome which inflict cruel wounds, and which make a great impreſſion on the credulity of the public.'

" M. de Vaudreuil imagining that he alluded to a pamphlet juſt publiſhed by the Count de Lauraguais, anſwered, with a careleſs air, ' You have only to peruſe the late publication of M. de Lauraguais, and you will immediately be convinced that there is nothing in it that need give you uneaſineſs. It is much too weak to hurt you.'

" M. de Vaudreuil had no ſooner made this obſervation, than he perceived anger and reſentment flaſh from the eyes of the philoſopher.

" ' What!' cried he, ' has that villain written a pamphlet againſt me? How dreadful it is to be reſtrained by my miniſterial

ſterial character? What pleaſure ſhould I feel in plunging a poniard into his heart!

" M. de Vaudreuil, ſurprized and ſhocked at ſuch violence, immediately aroſe, ſaying, as he withdrew, 'Believe me, ſir, I only mentioned to you the name of M. de Lauraguais, becauſe I thought you were ſpeaking to me of his work. Aſſuredly it was not my intention to act the part of an informer againſt him.'

" The next morning the Count d'Adhemar, one of M. de Vaudreuil's friends, called upon him, and read a letter which he had juſt received from Madame Necker. The letter was full of inflated panegyrics on M. de Vaudreuil, expreſſing how much pleaſed Mr. Necker had been with his converſation, and how greatly flattered by the honour of his acquaintance, &c. It concluded, by deſiring M. d'Adhemar to procure from his friend a copy of the work of M. de Lauraguais. This the former peremptorily refuſed, declaring, at the ſame time, how much he had been ſhocked at the indecent violence

violence of the man, and proteſting that he would never again enter his houſe."

Notwithſtanding the unexpected mortification which Mr. Necker ſuſtained by his diſmiſſion, he comforted himſelf in the firm perſuaſion that he ſhould very ſoon be recalled. His friends and creatures, in the meanwhile, continued to aſſert everywhere that he was the only man who could reeſtabliſh the affairs of the nation. A work in four volumes, on the adminiſtration of the finance, was the fruit of his retirement, and what he conceived would be an infallible means of procuring his recall; which, however, did not take place till ſome years after; when being recalled to the adminiſtration, he was then placed in the cabinet with more influence than ever. The regulation of the form for convoking the States General was then in agitation, and that operation could not but be very embarraſſing to a miniſter, ſo ſuperficially acquainted, as Mr. Necker was, with the hiſtory and the public law of France. He employed ſeveral perſons to compile extracts from hiſtory,

hiſtory, relative to that ſubject, and to conſult thoſe men who were thought the moſt enlightened in ſuch matters. This reſearch being completed, Mr. Necker, as is generally believed, was not a little diſappointed by finding no precedent or authority for giving the Tiers a double repreſentation in the approaching aſſembly of the States General; for which reaſon he prevailed on the king to adopt the meaſure of convening the notables, to take their opinion.

Being too little acquainted with men or with things to foreſee the riſk of the ſmalleſt innovation on the ancient forms of the government, at a time when men's minds were extremely agitated; or being too preſumptuous to dread that riſk, Mr. Necker had the imprudence to ſubmit to the diſcuſſion of the notables the important queſtion relative to the double repreſentation of the *Tiers Etat*, which had been agitated in ſome pamphlets; and he had afterwards the raſh inconſiſtency to influence his majeſty to decide in favour of the double repreſentation, in contradiction to the almoſt

unanimous opinion of thoſe very notables, who had been called for the expreſs purpoſe of giving their advice on that important point.

Experience has but too much proved the pernicious effect of this meaſure. Mr. Necker certainly was not aware of this; but eagerly graſping at popularity, he avowed and boaſted that he was the author of this innovation, reſting entirely on the gratitude of the *Tiers Etat*, and the promiſes made him by ſome of their deputations, to employ all their power to re-eſtabliſh the king's authority, and to put it equally out of the reach of the attacks of the parliaments and of the nobility.

From that moment Mr. Necker ſhewed himſelf the zealous protector of the commons and of their pretenſions. He even puſhed his infatuation ſo far, as to ſuſpend, by order of council, the judicial proceedings commenced in Britanny, on account of popular inſurrections which had taken place there.

The

The concurrence of ſo many titles ſeemed to give him the aſſurance of great credit in the aſſembly of the States General, about to open at that time; and certainly, with a ſmall ſhare of addreſs, and leſs preſumption, he would have acquired it in a conſiderable degree. The deputies of the commons of Britanny, who had the greateſt ſhare of influence in their Order, were entirely diſpoſed to be directed by him, and addreſſed themſelves to me to make the propoſal to him, a fortnight or three weeks after the opening of the aſſembly; but he formally refuſed it, for fear of being accuſed of having procured a double repreſentation to the *Tiers Etat*, from the ſole view of inſuring their ſubmiſſion to himſelf. Being convinced that the deciſions of an aſſembly, where the commons had the majority, could not but be favourable to his ambition, he thought it would be uſeleſs and perhaps injurious to his popularity to be ſuſpected of influencing the deliberations of that aſſembly. He often declared, that the duty

duty of the king's miniſter, with reſpect to the States General, was confined to the aſſembling of them, and to the conducting them to the door of the hall in which they were to meet; but that when the aſſembly was once opened, they ought no longer to be directed by any thing but the light of their own underſtandings, and their inſtructions."

At this period Mr. Necker ſeemed to hold the deſtiny of France in his own hands. Without having the title of prime miniſter, he enjoyed more influence and power than any prime miniſter had ever poſſeſſed. He alone dictated all the deciſions of the council. His opinion was always adopted by the king. His colleagues, who had rather the appearance of being his firſt clerks, were very aſſiduous in paying court to him, and from morning to night his houſe was full of deputies.

The debates which aroſe amongſt the Tiers Etat, at the opening of the States General, on account of the verification of their powers, and reſpecting their voting by

orders, had engroſſed, for two months, the labours of the aſſembly; their whole buſineſs, during that time, being reduced to certain attacks on the royal authority; ſome of more, ſome of leſs importance: to put an end to which, Mr. Necker propoſed the famous declaration of the 23d of June, by which the king granted the principal demands made by the inſtructions of the deputies, announced the moſt favourable diſpoſitions with regard to thoſe which required more ample conſideration, eſtabliſhed periodical aſſemblies of the States General, provincial aſſemblies, &c.

The meaſure was of ſo much importance, that before the king adopted it, he thought it right to ſubmit it to the diſcuſſion of an extraordinary council, to which the princes his brothers, and the moſt enlightened counſellors of ſtate, were ſummoned. The plan of the declaration, framed by Mr. Necker, was unanimouſly adopted, the following corrections excepted:

Firſt, The deliberation of the 17th of June, in the tennis-court, by which the Tiers

Tiers Etat had declared itſelf a national aſſembly, was not formally annulled in the plan formed by Mr. Necker.

The opinion which prevailed at the council was formally to declare the nullity of that deliberation, and of all which followed it, and to re-eſtabliſh the title of States General.

Secondly, Mr. Necker, in his plan, had taken no notice of the diſtinction of the three claſſes of Deputies Etat, but had merely authorized the aſſembly to vote individually for that time only; that is to ſay, during that ſeſſion.

The opinion which prevailed in the council was to keep up that diſtinction, and to authorize the aſſembly to vote individually only in the caſe where the object of deliberation equally regarded the citizens of all claſſes.

Thirdly, The plan of Mr. Necker contained an article, which declared that the citizens of every claſs ſhould be admitted equally into all offices, without any other diſtinction than that of abilities and virtues.

The opinion which prevailed at the council was to ſuppreſs that article, upon the ground, that before the ordinance, publiſhed in the adminiſtration of the Marechal de Segur, the citizens of all claſſes were admitted into military employments, as they have always been into the magiſtracy and eccleſiaſtical profeſſions; that it was ſufficient, therefore, to revoke that ordinance by a new one, proceeding from the king, which revocation would have the whole effect of the article propoſed by Mr. Necker, and did not require the ſolemnity of a law publiſhed in the States General.

Laſtly, By an article of Mr. Necker's plan, the aſſembly was empowered to regulate the organization of all future aſſemblies of the States General.

The opinion which prevailed in council was to ſuppreſs that article, becauſe the right of regulating the form and conſtitution of the States General belongs eſſentially, and had always belonged, to the king alone. And if this article was agreed to, the aſſembly would unqueſtionably decide,

cide, that all future aſſemblies ſhould be compoſed preciſely like the preſent; namely, that two thirds of the aſſembly ſhould be taken from the Order of the Tiers: for beſides the ſix hundred deputies, there were, among the three hundred of which the clergy conſiſted, at leaſt two hundred *curés*, who, by birth, belonged to the Tiers Etat; of courſe the king's ancient and unqueſtionable prerogative, in this particular, would be entirely annihilated, and the whole power of the States General would be transferred to the Tiers Etat *.

The king approved of theſe corrections, and announced that he would go the next day to the aſſembly, with all his miniſters, to publiſh that declaration. The mortification which Mr. Necker's vanity made him feel, becauſe his opinion had not been entirely adopted by the council, inſpired him with the inſolent and fatal reſolution not to accompany the king to the aſſembly, upon that occaſion. This circumſtance was ſoon ſpread abroad, and all the mem-

* *Vide* Appendix, No. I.

bers of the aſſembly, as well as the public, concluded that the projected meaſure was contrary to the opinion of Mr. Necker. That conjecture, at a moment when the public confidence, and the whole popularity of the adminiſtration, were ſolely concentred in him, was ſufficient to occaſion the rejection of the moſt advantageous propoſals, without diſcuſſion. Such, in ſhort, was the declaration of the 23d of June, which, two months before, would have been received with tranſport, as the moſt ſignal benefit that could be conferred by the king, and in perfect conformity with the wiſhes of the nation.

The arrogance which the aſſembly diſplayed, in rejecting this declaration, but too clearly proved that the royal authority was nearly annihilated. It was far otherwiſe with reſpect to Mr. Necker's credit. It had never been ſo great. The aſſembly and the people approved, in the higheſt degree, his having dared to give the firſt example of oppoſition to the royal will. On their return from that ſitting, the

the deputies went in crouds to his hotel; but he affected a ſlight indiſpoſition, as an excuſe for not receiving the whole, and admitted only a very ſmall number of them. It was feared that his diſmiſſion would be the conſequence of the pretended patriotiſm which he had the courage to diſplay on this occaſion. No more was wanting to ſpread the alarm in Verſailles. In the evening he waited on the king. As ſoon as it was known, an immenſe mob ruſhed into the court of the palace, and ſoon after, nothing was heard but ſhouts of *Vive M. Necker!* No reſignation! and not one *Vive le Roi!* No one doubted, that in coming from the king, Mr. Necker would have had the prudent modeſty to withdraw himſelf from the unbridled tranſports of the populace, by returning by the inner paſſage which led from the palace to the comptroller-general's hotel. But he was much too fond of popular applauſe to wiſh to loſe any of it, eſpecially at a moment when he conſidered it as an infallible preſervative againſt the effects of the royal diſpleaſure. He

therefore came out of the palace through the public court. Inſtantly the multitude ruſhed to the place where he was to paſs, with redoubled ſhouts, and made him promiſe not to give in his reſignation; which having done, thoſe who were neareſt raiſed him in their arms to ſhew him to the people, and in that manner he was carried in triumph to his hotel.

From that moment diſturbances, and the ſpirit of inſurrection, made a progreſs ſo rapid and ſo alarming, that the king reſolved to diſmiſs a ſet of miniſters, who had but too well proved their incapacity to prevent the impending evils, or to remedy them when they arrived. Mr. Necker was the firſt diſmiſſed. He departed ſecretly, on the 11th of July, from Verſailles, according to the king's orders, and ſet off for Switzerland. As ſoon as the news of his departure arrived at Paris, it excited the moſt violent commotions. His buſt, and that of the Duke of Orleans, were paraded through the ſtreets, in the midſt of the moſt ſeditious clamours againſt the king, and againſt

againſt the new miniſters. The aſſembly, either from weakneſs, or from a deſire to preſerve, to the revolution, ſuch a miniſter as Mr. Necker, inſtead of ſupporting the government with all its authority, to ſecure the re-eſtabliſhment of order, meanly followed the impulſe of the populace, and obliged the king to recall the diſgraced miniſters, or, to ſpeak more correctly, to recall Mr. Necker; for according to the prevailing opinion, the only circumſtance which created any degree of intereſt in the fate of the other miniſters was their having had the honour to ſhare his diſgrace.

If, at a time when the public opinion was ſo enthuſiaſtically in his favour, Mr. Necker had refuſed to return, and had continued, for the reſt of his life, at his retreat in Switzerland, he might perhaps have been conſidered, by poſterity, among the greateſt miniſters that ever France produced. As for my own part, I ſhould have been well pleaſed that mankind had continued in this miſtake, becauſe the circumſtance which had removed it has coſt ſo very dear to my country;

country; for, unhappily for France and for the glory of Mr. Necker, he choſe to return to the adminiſtration, and entirely removed the deluſion under which the nation laboured reſpecting his abilities.

It is difficult to calculate what would have been the effects of ſo wiſe a determination. It is not impoſſible that there might have reſulted from it very ſerious attempts even upon the perſon of the king; and if that conſideration determined Mr. Necker to return into adminiſtration, it is certainly impoſſible not to give him credit for ſo generous a motive. But to have rendered his zeal uſeful to the king and to the ſtate, at that period, he had but one line of conduct to adopt, which was, to have immediately preſented himſelf to the aſſembly, and after having thanked them for the concern with which they had honoured him, to have candidly announced to them that he was the author of the declaration of the 23d of June, as it had been read in the aſſembly, except ſome expreſſions which

which had been altered, which by no means altered the ſenſe of it; that he ſolemnly perſiſted in the opinion, that the form of government eſtabliſhed by that law, according to the wiſhes expreſſed in the majority of the inſtructions, was the only one proper for France; therefore his conſcience, his honour, and his zeal made it his duty not to return into adminiſtration till the aſſembly had declared their adherence to the declaration of the 23d of June. The general confidence and vaſt credit which Mr. Necker enjoyed at that moment enabled him to give the people whatever impreſſion he pleaſed, and to have made it impoſſible for the aſſembly to have rejected his propoſitions. It was in his power, at this period, to have had many abuſes corrected, the monarchy wiſely limited and preſerved; and by ſo important a ſervice, he would have ſecured to himſelf as long a miniſterial career as his ambition could have deſired. But the tranſports of joy which burſt from the people, at his return, made him entirely loſe his ſenſes. His ſpeech, or rather the

few words which he was able to articulate, though flat and inſignificant, were very much applauded at the time. But not ſatisfied with the incenſe he had received at Verſailles, he ſet out to enjoy it in greater abundance at Paris. His arrival was announced to the municipality, and all the people haſtened thither, to enjoy the happineſs of ſeeing him again. He firſt repaired to the council of the *commune*, which was aſſembled in order to receive him, and there pronounced a pathetic ſpeech, in which he requeſted, as the greateſt proof which the citizens of Paris could give him of their attachment, that his return might be the epocha of the re-eſtabliſhment of order and of peace, the forgetting of all reſentments, of a general amneſty in favour of thoſe who had been proſecuted or arreſted on account of the late diſturbances, and eſpecially of M. de Buzenval, his countryman and friend. All theſe demands were voted, and agreed to unanimouſly by the council, and by the immenſe croud which filled the tribunes and the galleries. He could,

could, without the ſmalleſt difficulty, have obtained any thing he had thought proper to have aſked. He afterwards went to one of the halls in the *Hotel de Ville*; and, for the purpoſe of ſhewing himſelf to the people in the moſt intereſting point of view, he appeared in one of the balconies which looked into the *Place de Grave*, between his wife and daughter, who, to render the exhibition quite ſentimental and affecting, and alſo to draw part of the applauſe to themſelves, kiſſed his hands, and embraced him repeatedly.

He returned to Verſailles, charmed with his ſucceſs, and more than ever convinced of his own vaſt power and influence over the minds of the people. But that illuſion did not long continue. Scarce had he arrived at the barrier of Paris, when the ſections being aſſembled, and having heard what had paſſed at the *Hotel de Ville*, conſidered the declaration which had taken place, on the propoſal of Mr. Necker, as a manifeſt attack on the rights of the king and

of

of the national aſſembly, who alone were competent to grant an amneſty; conſequently that deliberation was declared null by the ſections; and four hours after the departure of the courier, diſpatched to ſet M. de Buzenval at liberty, other couriers were ſent, to order him to be again arreſted. This fatal reverſe, which Mr. Necker could only impute to the abſurdity of his own conduct, was like a clap of thunder to him. His haughtineſs and his hopes abandoned him. His importance and his popularity declined daily with the greateſt rapidity. Thus the day which he conſidered as the moſt glorious of his life, was, in fact, the laſt day of his glory. Far from preſerving any credit with the aſſembly, he ſaw it diminiſhing daily. Thoſe who had before been his ſecret enemies, now declared themſelves openly, attacking him with bitterneſs, and overwhelming him with odium. They at length reduced him to the humiliating neceſſity of eſcaping, in the night-time, from the danger of a popu-

lar

lar inſurrection, which they excited ſolely for the purpoſe of alarming and driving him out of France.

Thus miſerably ended the miniſterial career of that extraordinary man, whoſe faults have coſt France ſo dear. I ſay his faults, and not his crimes; for though I cannot reproach myſelf with having felt, for a moment, the ſmalleſt prejudice in favour of Mr. Necker, I knew him well enough to be firmly perſuaded that he never intended the ill he has done, or that he had the leaſt notion that his meaſures would produce it. I only blame his vanity and his extravagant preſumption. He ſo completely, in his conſcience, believed himſelf to be the ableſt miniſter that ever exiſted, that he would have been mortified to have only been compared with Sully and Colbert. He did not heſitate to believe, that he combined, in a ſuperior degree, all the great qualities of the greateſt miniſters, without any of their faults. Independent of his ſuperiority over them in what regarded his adminiſtration, he thought that the

the confidence which the public had in his virtues and talents would enable him to embark in greater undertakings than any of his predeceſſors.

When recalled to adminiſtration, that ſame preſumption, that ſame confidence in his own ſuperior genius, which had always diſtinguiſhed him, made him believe that he alone was capable of effecting the reſtoration of France, by giving it a new conſtitution. He was thoroughly perſuaded, that the beſt conſtitution for France would be that which ſhould ſecure to a miniſter, like himſelf, the greateſt ſhare of influence in the government, and the firmeſt ſtability in his ſituation. He thought that the ſureſt means of attaining that end, was to conciliate the favour and attachment of the majority of the States General. If they had been conſtituted according to the ancient forms, the majority would have reſted in the united orders of the clergy and the nobility. Mr. Necker having no means of attaching to himſelf the members of theſe two orders, who, as they were not connected

connected with him, and looked for no ſervices at his hands, owed him no gratitude. The meaſure he choſe to adopt, therefore, was, that of loudly proclaiming himſelf the protector of the Tiers Etat. He was reſolved to riſk every thing, in order to give them the preponderance, not doubting but that as that Order would owe to him all its power, it would uſe it in the manner moſt conformable to the views of ſo popular a miniſter.

Such ſeems to me the moſt rational judgment which thoſe who knew Mr. Necker could form of his conduct. To him, certainly, the diſaſters of the revolution are chiefly imputable; but they muſt be ſet down to the account of his vanity and want of ability, not to that of his wickedneſs. I am as far from believing, with the admirers of Mr. Necker, that he was the ableſt of miniſters and the moſt virtuous of men, as from admitting, with his detractors, that he wiſhed to deſtroy the monarchy, the nobility, and the clergy, becauſe he was himſelf a republican of low extraction, and a proteſtant. Poſterity,

which will appreciate him without prejudice, will ſee in him a man, ſelfiſh, ambitious, and vain; fooliſhly intoxicated with the merit which he believed himſelf to poſſeſs, and jealous of that of others; deſirous of exceſs of honour and of power; virtuous in words and through oſtentation more than in reality. In a word, he was a preſumptuous empiric in politics and morals; but he was conſcientiouſly ſo, for he was always the firſt dupe of his own empiriciſm.

He was attached to France, if not by affection, at leaſt from always having conſidered it as the theatre of glory to which he thought himſelf ſummoned.

Fifty years ſooner, when France was in tranquillity, his adminiſtration would have proved no more hurtful to that nation, than the magnetiſm of Meſner to men of firmneſs and ſound underſtanding.

As a miniſter, he had no other merit than that of having acquired a perfect knowledge of what is called the *mechaniſm* of finances; but he was perfectly ignorant of

the laws of the kingdom, and of the principles of adminiſtration. As a literary man, although his works are laborioufly compoſed, and written with affected emphaſis, yet the uſeful truths which ſome of them contain will ſecure him a place among the diſtinguiſhed writers of the age.

CHAP. VIII.

The danger of permitting the national aſſembly to iſſue decrees.—Motives and means of maintaining the practice of voting by Order.—The diſmiſſion and recall of Mr. Necker.——Endeavours of the deputies from Britanny to get me appointed Garde de Sceaux.—*Oppoſition on my part.—Memorial, on the reformation of which the magiſtracy was ſuſceptible.—New organization of the adminiſtrative bodies.—Advantages which might have been drawn from it.—Character of M. de Montmorin.—Retreat of M. de Fleuricu, in conſequence of the perfidious conduct of one of his clerks.—The king, through M. de Montmorin, offers me the place of miniſter of the marine.—Reaſons of my refuſing. The appointment of M. Thevenard to that office.*

THE firſt deliberation, which the aſſembly thought proper to denominate Decree, was, by this title alone, not only a violation

violation of the ancient conſtitution, which never, in any caſe, authoriſed the States General to iſſue decrees, but it was alſo the moſt ſerious poſſible attempt againſt royal authority, which, from that moment, ceaſed to exiſt. This point was thoroughly canvaſſed in the memorial above-mentioned, which M. de Montmorin gave to Mr. Necker, in which I inſiſted, that there was no law of the kingdom, authoriſing the States General to iſſue decrees; and that, in fact, no aſſembly of the States had ever aſſumed that prerogative; that if this form ſhould be introduced through a new conſtitution, approved of by the king and the nation, good and well: but no ſuch thing exiſted at preſent, and the conduct of the States General ſhould be regulated according to the exiſting laws; therefore all the acts hitherto made by the States, and entitled decrees, ought to be annulled. For if the aſſembly could of themſelves pronounce decrees, independent of any interpoſition of the king, what ſecurity had the nation that they would not iſſue a decree

for taking poſſeſſion of the finance? in which caſe the king would become a mere cypher, and the monarchy would be annihilated *."

The beſt method of avoiding this danger was to inſiſt upon the States voting by their different Orders; and the preſent emergency preſented the king with a juſt and indiſputable motive of terminating the diſputes which had ariſen upon this occaſion, and of deciding the queſtion againſt individual votes

The nobility, and the higher order of the clergy of Britanny, had refuſed to name their deputies to the States General, upon the pretence that the form of their convocation was contrary to the cuſtoms and privileges of the province. The ten deputies, that the higher clergy had named, were replaced by ten curates, who belonged to the Order *du Tiers*, at leaſt by birth; but

* In fact, the national aſſembly afterwards perceived the force of this; for by the conſtitution which they eſtabliſhed, no act of the aſſembly could have the force of a law or decree, until it received the king's approbation.

the

the twenty-one deputies, which the nobleſſe of Britanny ought to have ſent, were not replaced by the gentlemen of the other provinces; therefore the Order of the nobility had, in the States General, twenty-one members leſs, and the Order of the Tiers had about ten members more, than they ought. It neceſſarily reſulted, that in every queſtion decided by individual votes, the Order of the clergy and the nobility would conſtantly find themſelves in a minority of twenty-one at leaſt; and that conſequently all the power of this aſſembly, compoſed of three Orders, would reſide in one excluſively. This ſimple calculation, inſerted in the preamble of a law in which the king would have preſcribed to the aſſembly to vote by Orders, would have been ſufficient to have ſhewn the wiſdom and juſtice of the meaſure, and have gained the king all the ſuffrages. But Mr. Necker was not yet convinced, that voting individually was more dangerous than uſeful. And with regard to the title which the aſſembly gave to its acts, he placed no im-

portance upon it. "It is only," ſaid he to M. de Montmorin, "a mere diſpute upon words; and it is not with words that we muſt occupy ourſelves. The parliaments give deciſions (*arrets*), the aſſembly iſſues decrees, but the king always preſerves the right of annulling the deciſions and decrees which are contrary to the laws."

All this fine reaſoning was completely falſe, and only proved the want of foreſight in the man; for it is but too certain, that words have been one great inſtrument of the revolution. It was by words, which the people did not comprehend, that their character, morals, and cuſtoms were changed, and that they were at length brought to conſider the greateſt crimes as acts of patriotiſm and virtue. On the other hand, could Mr. Necker, with ſincerity, compare the deciſions of courts of juſtice to the acts of ſovereign legiſlation, proceeding from a national aſſembly, whoſe ambitious preſumption ſo evidently tended to deprive the king of all authority? The deciſion made

made in the tennis-court, by which the Order *du Tiers* had conſtituted itſelf, by its own authority, "*Aſſemblée Nationale*," was broken by an article in the king's declaration of the 23d of June. But this article had the fate of the whole declaration, which proved abortive, as the aſſembly refuſed to obey it, the miniſtry, under the influence of Mr. Necker, being afraid to enforce its execution. The king becoming, at length, ſenſible of this, came to the reſolution of diſmiſſing Mr. Necker, and alſo thoſe miniſters who were either deceived or miſled by him. But the inſurrection at Paris, which happened three days after, obliged the new miniſters to give in their reſignation, and quit the kingdom; the ſole means of eſcaping the fury of the people, who demanded, with loud cries, the recall of Mr. Necker, and thoſe of his colleagues who partook in his diſgrace; to all which requiſitions, it is univerſally known, the king was forced to conſent.

As ſoon as the day of Mr. Necker's arrival at Verſailles was known, the deputation

tion from the commons of Britanny waited on him, and delivered him a memorial, the object of which was to demand the place of *Garde des Sceaux* for me. I was no ſooner informed of this ſtep, than I wrote to Mr. Necker, to aſſure him I had no part in it, and requeſting him not to think of me for any place whatever, becauſe I knew of none in which I could be of any uſe in the preſent circumſtances. He did not anſwer this letter; and the archbiſhop of Bourdeaux was named *Garde des Sceaux*.

It was but too eaſy to foreſee, that every place to which I might be ſuppoſed, from my former ſituations, to have pretenſions, would ſoon become dangerous, and almoſt impoſſible for a man of honour and integrity to fulfil with utility. I therefore gave myſelf up entirely to the duties of my office of *maître des requêtes*, to the privy council, &c.

At the period when the aſſembly prepared to regulate the courts of juſtice, I publiſhed a memorial, indicating ſome reforms of which thoſe courts were ſuſceptible,

ible. The conſtant and laborious ſtudy which I had beſtowed on this ſubject, enabled me to propoſe a plan, in which all that ſeemed good in the ancient inſtitutions ſhould be united with whatever was wiſe and uſeful in the various ſyſtems now propoſed. Several members of the council and the parliament, and many of the deputies, greatly approved of my memorial; and I have reaſon to believe that it would have proved of ſome utility, if the party which governed the aſſembly had not been itſelf governed by a rage as extravagant as it proved fatal. Thus the parliaments, betrayed or ill ſupported by ſome of their own members, who happened to be deputies to the States General, and vilified by the numerous band of advocates and procureurs, which formed the majority of the Tiers, became among the firſt victims of the deſolating genius of that aſſembly, whoſe convocation they themſelves had promoted.

The organization of the department of the municipalities, and particularly of the diſtricts

diſtricts of Paris, introduced a new power, upon the ſcene of the revolution, which the factious took advantage of, to render its courſe more rapid; but which might have been made ſubſervient to ſtop it entirely, or, at leaſt, to direct it better. This might have been accompliſhed, if the nobility, inſtead of rendering themſelves of no conſequence, by acting ſingly, and by manifeſting the greateſt, and, unfortunately, the moſt fruitleſs antipathy againſt the pretended conſtitutional decrees, had ſeemed to yield to circumſtances, and had reſerved their final opinion of the merit of the new laws to future experience. They would ſoon have had the majority in the aſſemblies of the diſtricts, provided they had attended them aſſiduouſly, and ſhewn this ſpirit of moderation and prudence. It would have been an eaſy matter for them to have taken a deciſive lead in the deliberations at firſt, becauſe, in the beginning, the *bourgeoiſie*, and the inferior claſs, furniſhed but very indifferent orators, and ſtill fewer tolerable writers; and ſuch a number of both would not have been

been formed among the Tiers, if thoſe who were diſtinguiſhed by the appellation of ariſtocrates had not abſtained from attending the aſſemblies.

I had an opportunity of convincing myſelf of this truth, in the aſſemblies of the diſtrict "*des minimes*," where, however, I only went, for the firſt time, ſix months after its opening. M. de Corberon, counſellor of the parliament of Paris, that day filled the preſident's chair. He never opened his mouth without receiving applauſe; and every motion was paſſed or rejected, according as he thought proper to ſupport or oppoſe it. The other orators, moſt in credit, were counſellors belonging to the *chatelet*, advocates, procureurs, notaries, &c. all men tolerably well educated, and of good ſenſe. The inferior and uneducated people, at this time, did not even preſume to ſpeak.

The day after I had been enrolled in the liſt of active citizens, I was voted, by an almoſt unanimous voice, commiſſary of the diſtrict, although I was only known by an opinion

opinion I had pronounced in the aſſembly of that diſtrict on the preceding day, and which had been adopted. I found the committee compoſed of the wiſeſt perſons of the aſſembly. No ariſtocrates, indeed, but many as much royaliſts as myſelf; all, excepting one Dutrouillet, a mad republican, and ſince member of the convention. His extravagant declamations againſt the executive power were overlooked, on account of his ardent zeal for the poor, and for the general intereſt of the people, of whom he always ſpoke in that bombaſtic language which is ſo often miſtaken, by the multitude, for eloquence. There were ſome other ſeditious ſpirits in the ſection, who, from time to time, attempted revolutionary motions, in the meetings of the diſtrict; but the leaſt objection was ſufficient to make them be rejected, and often turned into ridicule.

The good diſpoſition of our aſſemblies was daily fortified and improved by advantageous acquiſitions. The firſt preſident *de la Cour des Aides*, and the preſident *de la Cour de Monnoyes*, who came

came after me, attended with unremitting aſſiduity; and for ſome time the ſection *des Minimes* was diſtinguiſhed from all the others by the wiſdom of its deciſions, the energy of its petitions to the national aſſembly, and by its prudent addreſſes to the other ſections.

All the new theories of adminiſtration were diſcuſſed, in theſe aſſemblies, with as much force as clearneſs, though always in that patriotic ſtyle which it was then abſolutely neceſſary to aſſume, in order to be liſtened to; and by repeating, as often as poſſible, the words "*liberty*, *equality*, *rights of men*," &c.

If, in the other parts of the kingdom, or even in the other ſections of Paris, all reaſonable people had followed our example, it is more than probable that they would, like us, have ſucceeded in preventing or unmaſking the criminal manœuvres of the factious, and gradually acquired ſuch a degree of credit, in the majority of the diſtricts, as would have influenced the national aſſembly,

aſſembly, and produced the happieſt effects in the courſe of the revolution.

As the diſtrict of the *Minimes* gave the greateſt umbrage to the Jacobins, they determined to uſe every means to diſturb its meetings, and to terrify reſpectable citizens from attending it; for which purpoſe numerous detachments of their boiſterous adherents derided, inſulted, and threatened all whoſe opinions were dictated by good ſenſe and moderation. The diſtrict ſupported theſe inſults for ſome time, but the moſt moderate withdrew themſelves, when they found that their perſeverance anſwered no end. This manœuvre of the Jacobins, which was irreſiſtible againſt a ſingle diſtrict, would not have ſucceeded, if they had been obliged to employ it againſt all the diſtricts of Paris; as they would have reciprocally have aſſiſted each other, and baffled the deſigns of that faction.

It may not be improper here to relate an anecdote, which may ſerve to give an idea of the freedom of opinions in this diſtrict.

When

When they proceeded to the election of the mayor of Paris, M. de Corberon ſaid, loud enough to be heard by about fifty people, who were on the ſame ſide of the hall, "As I firmly believe that the mayor, whom we are going to chooſe, will be hanged at laſt, I ſhall give my vote for the man who I think beſt deſerves a gibbet, and that is the Duke of Orleans." This ſpeech, which ſoon ſpread over the aſſembly, ſo far from exciting diſpleaſure, was rather applauded than blamed.

I may mention, as another inſtance to the ſame purpoſe, that I had, for more than nine months, attended the aſſemblies of the diſtrict, and the meetings of the committees, without a national cockade, and no notice was taken of it but by my friends, who were apprehenſive that this imprudence would expoſe me to inſults; but I had ſuch a horror for that badge of crime and revolt, that to avoid wearing it, I had never, ſince the king's arrival, gone to the caſtle of the Thuilleries, or to any public place, where I could not be admitted without a

cockade. I wore it, for the firſt time, on the day in which the king ſent for me, to propoſe to me the place of miniſter of the marine.

My forced retreat from the diſtrict of the *Minimes* obliged me to return back to that ſtate of inactivity, to which my reſignation of the intendance of Britanny had reduced me, and I became one of that too numerous claſs which remained paſſive ſpectators of this revolution, of which murder and pillage were at once the object and the means; a revolution, of which the whole kingdom was to be the prey; that has neither ſpared its authors nor their accomplices; for already many of them have been ſacrificed, and, being joined to more illuſtrious names, enlarge the immenſe liſt of its victims. From this time I confined myſelf to my own family, and to the ſociety of a few friends, only occupying myſelf in arranging my moderate fortune in ſuch a manner as would enable me to leave the kingdom, when I could no longer remain in it with ſafety. I continued, however, to dine

once a week with the Count of Montmorin, with whom I had been intimately connected ever ſince our reſidence in Britanny, where he was commander in chief when I was named Intendant of the province. He had remained in Britanny till the death of M. de Vergennes miniſter of foreign affairs, whoſe department was given to him.

Of all the men who acted an important part in the revolution, M. de Montmorin is perhaps the perſon who is leaſt known, and who has been judged with the greateſt ſeverity. The general opinion, with reſpect to him, is ſuch, that one cannot, without being ſuſpected of democracy, or, at leaſt, of being a conſtitutionaliſt, acknowledge having had any intimacy with him; and it requires ſome degree of boldneſs to defend his character. My connection with him has been often ſtated againſt me as a crime; and I ſhould not be ſurprized if that opinion, equally unjuſt and abſurd, was ſtill adhered to by ſome of thoſe firſt enthuſiaſts of emigration, who have the candour to imagine that there are no true royaliſts in

France, excepting thoſe who emigrated at the ſame period with themſelves. For my own part, I thought then, and do ſtill think, that it was my duty, as a lover of my king and country, not to abandon them at a period when both were in ſuch imminent danger, and while there remained any hopes of my being of ſervice to them. Yet I do not take upon me to blame thoſe who have acted differently; I only aſſert, very firmly, that their attachment to the king was not purer than mine, notwithſtanding my intimacy with M. de Montmorin, who was neither conſtitutionaliſt nor democrate, but a real royaliſt; and I may add, with truth, that I know no perſon who was a more faithful ſervant to the king. I muſt at the ſame time acknowledge, that the extreme weakneſs of his character prevented him from being uſeful to his majeſty, in circumſtances that required much energy; and it is probable that his fears may often have ſuggeſted meaſures more calculated to increaſe than to remedy the evils with which the king was threatened. This moral

weakneſs

weakneſs had its ſource in a ſickly conſtitution, and can no more be imputed to him as a crime, than his being of a low ſtature and ſlender frame of body.

Among the number of faults of which M. de Montmorin has been accuſed, it would be eaſy, if not entirely to juſtify, at leaſt to palliate the greater part, by demonſtrating that they never proceeded from perfidy or ſelf-intereſt. I one day had a quarrel with him, at his own houſe, upon the ſubject of a report made by M. de Freteau in the firſt aſſembly, in which he had aſſerted, that at the diplomatique committee, held the day before at M. de Montmorin's, that miniſter had ſaid, "that the Prince de Condé and the Cardinal de Rohan, who were out of the kingdom, were intriguing and manœuvring, in order to raiſe up foreign powers againſt France." M. de Montmorin, in anſwer to the bitter reproaches I made on this ſubject, ſaid, with conſiderable heat, "How could you, who know me, believe, for a moment, that I was capable of expreſſing myſelf in thoſe

terms? What I ſaid," continued M. de Montmorin, "was nearly the reverſe; for in ſpeaking of the neceſſity there was of repreſſing the various exceſſes which were committed, and which had forced the Prince of Condé to leave the kingdom, I endeavoured to ſhow, that it was of importance to employ every poſſible means of engaging that prince to return, becauſe he was ſo highly reſpected, that the idea of his being forced to emigrate muſt have a very bad effect on the minds of all the foreign powers, and would excite againſt France all thoſe who were allied to the houſe of Bourbon. With regard to the Cardinal de Rohan," added he, "we ſhould alſo endeavour to conciliate him, if we wiſhed for a favourable iſſue to our negociations with the princes of the empire, relative to their poſſeſſions in Alſace, becauſe he might greatly influence their determinations."

To all this, I replied to M. de Montmorin, "That ſince ſuch was the caſe, it was incumbent on him, without loſs of time, to give a formal denial to what M. de Freteau had

had ſaid in his report, and addreſs it in a letter to the aſſembly."

"I was thinking of that," anſwered M. de Montmorin. "But in caſe M. de Freteau has concerted the report with the other members of the committee, they are very capable, in ſupport of their manœuvre, to oppoſe their teſtimony to my aſſertion, which, though true, will be reputed falſe."

"Write, at leaſt," ſaid I, "to M. de Freteau, to make him retract, or rectify his report; and warn him, that if he does not, you will make your letter be printed in all the journals."

He approved of this plan, as the moſt moderate, and wrote, the ſame day, to M. de Freteau, who, in his anſwer, acknowledged that his report was erroneous; that it proceeded entirely from inattention; that inſtead of ſaying, "M. de Montmorin had aſſerted that the Prince de Condé and Cardinal de Rohan were manœuvring," &c. he (M. de Freteau) ought and intended to have ſaid, "that from M. de Montmorin's diſ-

courſe, he was led to conjecture that the Prince of Condé," &c.

He promiſed to make this error be corrected upon the regiſter, conformable to the opinion of the committee, and to inform his principal colleagues in the aſſembly. M. de Montmorin had the condeſcendance not to exact more. I in vain intreated that he would make this anſwer and his letter public. He thought it ſufficient to keep them both in his poſſeſſion, to be made uſe of only in caſe his conduct ſhould afterwards be publicly cenſured, on account of M. Freteau's report to the aſſembly. What is perhaps the moſt remarkable circumſtance in this affair is, that M. de Montmorin was quite aſtoniſhed at the energy which he thought he had diſplayed on the occaſion.

This trait is ſufficient to ſhew the timidity of this miniſter. I ſay timidity, not cowardice; he was by no means a coward. No man feared death leſs; and it will appear, in the courſe of theſe Memoirs, with what tranquillity he foreſaw and met his fate.

ſate. Nay, he even braved it, but in a manner agreeable to his character; namely, by continual correſpondences, and other concealed, though dangerous meaſures for the king's ſervice, which he directed and paid for out of the funds of his department. Among theſe expences was the money he thought it neceſſary to advance to certain popular orators, to counterbalance, in ſome degree, the furious declamations which were daily made againſt the king in the Jacobin club, and in various other clubs, aſſemblies, and groups.

When I repreſented to him the riſk that he ran, by this conduct, and the great danger there was, that ſome of the numerous agents which he employed would betray him, and expoſe him to be inſulted, or perhaps aſſaſſinated by the populace, he anſwered, with great coolneſs, "I am well aware of the truth of what you repreſent; but no perſonal danger ſhall ever prevent me, while I remain in the king's ſervice, from doing every thing that I think may be of utility to his majeſty." This way of thinking

thinking was very generous, no doubt; but the means he uſed were in my opinion infinitely leſs uſeful for the attaining the object he had in view, than many vigorous meaſures which he might have ſuggeſted to his majeſty, if he had poſſeſſed more energy of character, and leſs of that paſſive courage, which can only do honour to the cloſe of life, becauſe it enables us to die with firmneſs.

M. de Montmorin has been blamed for living in a kind of intimacy with certain deputies of the *coté gauche*. This, however, I have always conſidered as one of the ſtrongeſt and moſt painful marks of his attachment to his majeſty. I knew that he abhorred their opinions, and deſpiſed their characters, and that he lived in that manner with them, in the ſole view of bringing them over to his way of thinking. Theſe meaſures of weakneſs and duplicity were employed by the king's conſent, who truſted too much to them. Perhaps they might retard ſome pernicious decrees, and occaſion others to be rejected; but the moſt certain

certain and apparent effect was to make M. de Montmorin be looked upon as a zealous partizan of the revolution, and of its guilty authors. And thus, at the expence of his character, he obtained uncertain advantages, by far too inconſiderable to be purchaſed at ſo dear a rate.

It is not then aſtoniſhing, that the conduct of this miniſter has appeared criminal, or at leaſt ſuſpicious, to every perſon who was ignorant to what degree he was devoted to the king, and that not being able to ſerve him by firmneſs, becauſe he had none, he endeavoured to aſſiſt him by every method which his weakneſs permitted him to employ.

But had M. de Montmorin been called to the miniſtry in leſs turbulent times, or had he been aſſociated with miniſters of greater vigor and of more upright intentions, the inconveniencies ariſing from his timidity would have been fully compenſated, in council, by his acquired knowledge, his fidelity, and the preciſe juſtneſs of his underſtanding.

M. de

M. de Fleurieu, who ſucceeded M. de la Luzerne in the department of the marine, may alſo be quoted in the number of miniſters who had the ſame kind of weakneſs; with this difference, however, that his was never prejudicial to any body but to himſelf, becauſe he had the prudence to confine himſelf entirely to the details of the marine and the colonies; and the king, who greatly eſteemed his virtues, never employed him (as he did M. de Montmorin) in any affair foreign to his department. M. de Fleurieu, whom no one, certainly, reſpects more than I do, joined to that timid modeſty, which often accompanies the greateſt merit, the candour and confiding ſimplicity which often renders honeſt men the dupes of deſigning knaves; and this he experienced in a manner the moſt revolting. One of his clerks, called Bonjour, who was attached and ſold to the Jacobin club, being irritated becauſe the ancient Intendants of the marine, who had been ſuppreſſed by a decree, ſtill preſerved the ſame authority in the office, and the ſame

ſuperiority

ſuperiority over the clerks, by the direction of M. de Fleurieu, had the baſeneſs to denounce that miniſter to the aſſembly as an enemy to the conſtitution who was acting in oppoſition to the decrees of the aſſembly. As the foundation of this denunciation, he made uſe of an order for the payment of the ſalaries of the office, ſigned by M. de Fleurieu, but written by himſelf for the purpoſe. In inſerting the ſuppreſſed intendants in this order, inſtead of diſtinguiſhing them ſimply by their names, he had the perfidy to add their ancient titles, which had been prohibited by a decree of the aſſembly, although the miniſter was permitted to employ them as he pleaſed in his office. This order, thus arranged, being preſented by Bonjour to be ſigned, with ſeveral others, M. de Fleurieu, according to cuſtom, only looked at the title and the ſum total, and ſigned it without taking time to read over the names. His conduct had nothing in it reprehenſible; and the infamous denunciation of Bonjour muſt have recoiled upon himſelf, rendered him infamous,

famous, and he would have loſt his place, as being guilty of an abuſe of confidence, and of a voluntary and premeditated infringement of the decrees of the aſſembly; but M. de Fleurieu, ſatisfied with having juſtified himſelf, and apprehenſive of a quarrel with the Jacobins, if he turned off Bonjour, left him in the office, and gave in his own reſignation, to avoid the diſguſt of doing buſineſs with ſuch a wretch.

The deputies from Britanny had reiterated their endeavours for my being named *Garde des Sceaux*, upon the retreat of the archbiſhop of Bordeaux; and they now made a new attempt to have me made miniſter of the marine, in the room of M. de Fleurieu. This was propoſed to me by the king, through M. de Montmorin; but I begged of him to intreat his majeſty to diſpenſe with my accepting it. The motives which I urged for refuſing were, not only my abſolute ignorance of affairs relating to the department of the marine, but alſo the manner in which the council was then compoſed, and the great difficulty which

which the king muſt have found to have compoſed it of unexceptionable members, at a period when, even in the formation of his cabinet council, he was under a neceſſity to pay ſome regard to the ſentiments of the *coté gauche* of the aſſembly and the Jacobins; for their opinion paſſed for the opinion of the nation. M. de Montmorin, after having in vain combated the motives of my refuſal, aſked me what I thought of M. Thevenard, *commandant de la marine* at L'Orient, where I had frequently ſeen him during a month which I paſſed there in 1784. I ſaid, that the place he occupied, and of which he did the buſineſs very well, was perhaps the only ſituation he was fit for; and that it would be doing him the worſt ſervice in the world, to take it from him, but above all, to call him to the miniſtry, becauſe I was convinced that he would only expoſe himſelf, and could not remain in place two months.

The great difficulty of finding a proper perſon, determined the king, at this particular

cular time, to name M. Thevenard miniſter of the marine.

How much reaſon had I to felicitate myſelf, ſix weeks after, for having avoided, by my refuſal, the critical and unforeſeen ſituation into which the miniſters were thrown, by the king's departure for Varennes! During the time of his abſence, and even after his return, from the end of June till the middle of September, while he was confined to the Thuilleries like a priſoner, and deprived of all his regal functions, the miniſters continued in the exerciſe of their offices, as if his majeſty had been at liberty and in power. They no doubt imagined that they would be more uſeful to the king and kingdom, by acting ſo, than by giving in their reſignations; but aſſuredly their conduct, on this occaſion, would not have been mine. No conſideration would have induced me to conſent to become one of the chief agents, one of the firſt accomplices of a monſtrous government, in which the king, unworthily

outraged,

outraged, and impriſoned in his own palace, had not, nor could have, any part. The miniſters were perhaps too much terrified by the menaces which were made, in caſe of their refuſal, of immediately eſtabliſhing a republic, and were not aware of the more certain danger of preparing and familiarizing the public mind with the poſſibility of ſuch an event, by exhibiting to the people's view, during three months, the revolting and abſurd ſpectacle of a monarchy without a king. It is very probable that this fatal example gave riſe to the idea, which was four years afterwards adopted, of replacing the conſtitutional king of 1791, by a directory of five perſons.

CHAP. IX.

Retreat of M. Thevenard.—The king again propoſes that I ſhould enter into the adminiſtration.—I accept.—Sentiments of the king and queen upon the conſtitution.—A letter from me to the aſſembly.—Conference with M. Thevenard.—Opinion of the different parties, with reſpect to my nomination.—Ill diſpoſition of the aſſembly manifeſted in the very firſt ſitting.—Prudent conduct of the king.—The miniſters agree among themſelves to have no communication with the committees, and always to correſpond directly with the aſſembly.—Proclamation addreſſed to the emigrant nobility.—Letters from the miniſters of war and marine to the officers, to engage them to return to the kingdom.

THE new conſtitution was now agreed to. The king had no other alternative but to accept it as it was preſented to him,

him, without alteration or reſtriction, or to abdicate the crown; by accepting, he regained not the eſſential prerogatives, but only the vain title of a king, deprived of power, but with the enjoyment of his civil liſt, and the ceſſation of the humiliating rigours and exterior ſigns of his captivity. The pretended conſtitutional aſſembly being near the period affixed by itſelf for its termination, was to be replaced by the pretended legiſlative body, inveſted with the powers which the conſtitutional act had appointed; but with ſo little preciſion, that its ill aſcertained limits might be infringed without any obſtacle, for there exiſted no means of reſiſting any attack upon it, except the vague obligation impoſed upon the king, of employing all the power which was conſided in him to maintain the conſtitution. But to employ this power againſt the attacks of the legiſlative body would have required great energy in the king, and the ſupport of a council compoſed of miniſters who poſſeſſed

ſufficient diligence, fidelity, and intrepidity, to brave all dangers in order to preſerve the monarchy; but unfortunately there were few men, I will not ſay in the council only, but in all France, who poſſeſſed thoſe qualities, with which I ſtill believe it would have been poſſible to reſtrain the violences of the aſſembly, and the want of which brought all to ruin. It was in theſe critical circumſtances that M. Thevenard, who had but too well juſtified my opinion of him, gave in his reſignation.

On the 25th of October the king again offered to me, through M. de Montmorin, the office of miniſter of the marine; and in terms ſo preſſing, that I was at firſt as much ſurpriſed as embarraſſed. However, as the events which followed my firſt refuſal fortified the motives upon which it was founded, I perſiſted in intreating M. de Montmorin (as the greateſt proof of friendſhip he could give me) that he would do every thing in his power to influence the king to throw his eyes on ſome other perſon. The king

king wrote to me two days after, and enforced what M. de Montmorin had ſaid. His majeſty ended his letter with the following ſentence: "In a word, I am confident that your ſervices would be uſeful to me and to the ſtate. I know your attachment to me, and expect, in the preſent emergency, that you will give me this proof of your zeal and obedience."

In my anſwer to this letter, I perſevered in my former opinion, founding my repeated refuſal on the unjuſt but very univerſal prejudice that exiſted againſt all the ancient intendants of provinces, which would render me ſuſpected of being an enemy to the new order of things, with whatever prudence and moderation I might act.

The king, after having read my letter, ſaid to M. de Montmorin, who had delivered it: "But aſk M. Bertrand, then, how I am to find miniſters, and what is to become of me, if perſons ſuch as he, who profeſs themſelves attached to me, refuſe their ſervices, and abandon me?" I was greatly moved and

overcome by words ſo touching; and after the aſſurances given me by M. de Montmorin, that great changes were going to take place in the council, and that I ſhould be ſatisfied with the new miniſters, I no longer heſitated to anſwer that I was at the king's command; but I requeſted that his majeſty would not make my nomination public, until he granted me an audience. The next day, which was the 1ſt of October, M. de Leſſart came to me from the king, and conducted me into his apartment.

As it was the firſt time that I had ever had the honour of ſpeaking to his majeſty, on finding myſelf *tête-a-tête* with him, I was ſo overwhelmed with timidity, that if it had been my part to ſpeak firſt, I ſhould not have been able to pronounce a ſentence. But I acquired courage, on obſerving that the king was more embarraſſed than myſelf. He ſtammered out a few words without connection, but at laſt recovered himſelf, on ſeeing me more at my eaſe,

eaſe, and our converſation ſoon became intereſting.

After ſome general obſervations upon the preſent difficult and perplexed ſtate of public affairs, the king ſaid to me, "Well, have you any farther objections?"

"No, ſire," anſwered I. "The deſire of obeying and pleaſing your majeſty, is the only ſentiment I feel. But that I may know whether it will be in my power to ſerve you with utility, I hope your majeſty will have the condeſcenſion to inform me of your ſentiments reſpecting the new conſtitution, and the conduct you expect from your miniſters regarding it."

"That is but juſt," ſaid the king. "This, then, is what I think. I am far from regarding this conſtitution as a *chef d'œuvre*. I believe there are great faults in it; and that if I had been allowed to ſtate my obſervations upon it, ſome advantageous alterations might have been adopted. But of this there is no queſtion at preſent; I have ſworn to maintain it, ſuch as it is, and I am determined, as I ought, to be ſtrictly

faithful to my oath; for it is my opinion, that an exact execution of the conſtitution is the beſt means of making it thoroughly known to the nation, who will then perceive the changes proper to be made. I have not, and I cannot, have another plan than this. I certainly ſhall not recede from it; and I wiſh my miniſters to conform to the ſame."

To this I anſwered, "Your plan appears to me extremely wiſe, ſire. I feel myſelf capable of fulfilling it, and I take the engagement to do ſo. I have not ſo ſufficiently examined the conſtitution, either in general, or in its particular branches, to have a decided and fixed opinion reſpecting its practicability, nor ſhall I form one, until experience has more enlightened the nation and myſelf. My preſent reſolution is, never to deviate from what it preſcribes. But may I be permitted to aſk, if the queen's way of thinking on this ſubject, is conformable to that of your majeſty?" added I.

"Yes,

"Yes, perfectly. She will tell you ſo herſelf."

A moment after, I went to the queen's apartment, who, after aſſuring me with great goodneſs, that ſhe was as ſenſible as the king of the obligations I had laid them under by accepting of a part in the adminiſtration in circumſtances ſo difficult, ſhe added theſe words: "The king has informed you of his intentions relative to the conſtitution. Don't you think, that the only plan he has to follow, is to adhere to his oath?"

"Yes, certainly, madam," anſwered I.

"Well, be aſſured," rejoined ſhe, "that nothing ſhall make us alter our reſolution. *Allons*; be of good courage, M. Bertrand. With a little patience, firmneſs, and conſiſtency of conduct, I hope you will find that all is not yet loſt."

I was named miniſter the 1ſt of October, and next day took my oath to the king. According to cuſtom, I announced my nomination by a letter to the aſſembly. Many remarks were made, but without any

apparent

apparent diſpleaſure, on my not having imitated my predeceſſors, by flattering the aſſembly, and praiſing the conſtitution. I ſimply expreſſed in my letter, "that having ſworn to the king to be faithful to the conſtitution, I engaged myſelf to the aſſembly to adhere literally to my oath, and promote the execution of the conſtitution by every means within my ſphere."

M. Thevenard was much more impatient to be out of the miniſtry than I was to enter it. When he heard of my firſt refuſal to replace him, imagining that it proceeded from my inexperience in maritime affairs, he ſent me word that he would give me every neceſſary inſtruction; and when he afterwards heard of my accepting, he was perſuaded that it was his offer alone that had overcome all my objections and difficulties. Two days after my inſtalment, he demanded a rendezvous, that he might fulfil his promiſe. Although I did not expect any very uſeful information from him, yet out of regard to the integrity of the man, and goodneſs of his intentions, I appointed to

meet him on that ſame day. He came loaded with a port-folio, which I ſuppoſed was to be given to me, as the quinteſſence of all that was neceſſary to be known reſpecting the adminiſtration of marine and the colonies. However, he only took a ſmall packet out of it, upon which there were five or ſix ſeals, and which, ever ſince the adminiſtration of the Marechal de Caſtries, had been tranſmitted, in ſucceſſion, to the miniſters of marine. It was inſcribed, "*to be opened only in time of war.*" M. Thevenard told me, when he put it into my hands, that he believed it contained the ſecret of a method contrived by M. de Bellegarde, for ſetting the enemy's ſhips on fire. He then ſeated himſelf at my bureau, and ſpoke to me as follows:

"Well, you have obtained a very advantageous, agreeable appointment, and I leave it to you in an excellent condition. You will find no great difficulty in the exerciſe of it; only the occaſional teazings of the aſſembly; a war of pens. You will extricate yourſelf better than I could. I was in bad health.

health. But at preſent the worſt is over. This new aſſembly will be more tractable than the other. Your office is well compoſed. You have excellent firſt clerks, diligent, worthy men; very zealous, that is the main point. I muſt make you acquainted with them. You have, in the firſt place, M. de Malezieu, who has the department of officers, the nomination to employments, &c. But this muſt be written down, for it is of great importance. Accordingly he gave himſelf the trouble of writing every minute article relative to M. de Malezieu's department, exactly as it is printed in the Royal Almanack. With equual preciſion he wrote down all that belonged to the departments of the other firſt clerks, each of whom was ſucceſſively called in as the article which concerned him was writing; and they were all preſented to me with ſuch exaggerated encomiums as greatly diſtreſſed their modeſty. When he came to the article of the clerk Bonjour, I could not help expreſſing ſurpriſe, on hearing him praiſe that knave, after his infamous conduct

duct to M. de Fleurieu, the late miniſter of the marine.

"I own," anſwered he, "that I never would take any part in that quarrel. I always avoided ſpeaking of it. Bonjour is protected by the Jacobins—by the aſſembly. What could I do? His diſpute with Fleurieu was no concern of mine. The man is aſſiduous, very intelligent. He does his buſineſs, and that was all I wanted."

"But how," ſaid I, "could you have the leaſt confidence in a perſon who was firſt capable of drawing up a paper himſelf, and after he had got M. de Fleurieu to ſign it, with a view to ruin him, lay the whole before the national aſſembly?"

"I have already told you," anſwered he, "that I never inveſtigated that affair."

"But were you not afraid," ſaid I, "that he would play you a ſimilar trick?"

"Oh, no," anſwered he; "I took care of that. Beſides, I had a manner of living with my clerks, which attached them ſo much, that they never could think of injuring

juring me. I always treated them like friends; and in the morning, when they came to do buſineſs with me, my method was, to order a bottle of good wine; and ſo we began by taking a comfortable breakfaſt together. You cannot imagine what a good effect this had. I adviſe you to do the ſame."

"I believe it is a very good method," ſaid I, "but it will not do for me, becauſe I never breakfaſt. I muſt make up for this, by ſometimes inviting them to dinner."

"You will do well to do ſo," anſwered he; "and I adviſe you to reflect ſeriouſly on the manner you are to behave to Bonjour. He is a dangerous man, be aſſured of that."

"We ſhall ſee," anſwered I.

"Theſe, ſir," reſumed he, "are the hints which I thought it eſſential to give to you. With regard to leſs important circumſtances reſpecting your department, your firſt clerks can inform you of theſe much better than I can; they are all very intelligent."

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I expreſſed my gratitude for the ſervice he had rendered me, and we terminated our converſation, which laſted two hours, including the introduction of the clerks.

The public was then very attentive to the choice of the miniſters, becauſe, from their character, their known principles, and their former conduct, an idea, more or leſs juſt, might be formed of the king's ſentiments and intentions. My nomination occaſioned great ſpeculation, as, ſince the opening of the firſt aſſembly, I had acted no part, nor figured in any party. Thoſe who knew my intimacy with M. de Montmorin, and who knew that I had regularly aſſiſted at the aſſemblies of the ſection, believed that I was a conſtitutionaliſt; and thoſe who were informed of the zeal with which I had ſupported the intereſt of the people in Britanny, and the ſteps which the deputies of that province had taken to have me nominated to the miniſtry, believed me to be a Jacobin. Others, from my birth, and the offices I had held, ſuſpected me of ariſtocracy; while the moſt moderate ariſtocrats

tocrats condemned me for taking any part in the adminiſtration, after a conſtitution which they diſapproved of was accepted. The principal journaliſts for ſome time contributed to keep up this diverſity of opinion. The Gazette of Paris, which was written by Duroſoi, and the paper entitled *l'Ami du Roi*, by the Abbé Royou, were full of ſarcaſms upon my nomination. Briſſot publiſhed my eulogium in the *Patriote François*; but Condorcet, more circumſpect, did not mention me in the *Chronique de Paris*.

The legiſlative aſſembly manifeſted, in the firſt ſitting, the greateſt deſire to conteſt the honours and prerogatives which the conſtitution and the preceding aſſembly had left to the king. On the ſecond day it was decreed, that when the king ſhould come to the opening of the aſſembly, the preſident ſhould place himſelf on a level, and on an equal chair with his majeſty. This excited a general indignation againſt the aſſembly; and although the conſtitution had fixed nothing with reſpect to the king and the preſi-

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dent's chairs, as the former aſſembly had never conteſted giving the king the moſt honourable place, this inſolent pretenſion of the new deputies was highly diſapproved of. It was ſtill thought proper that the king ſhould be honoured, and it was unanimouſly wiſhed that he ſhould, upon this occaſion, firmly aſſert the dignity which belonged to him. The affair being diſcuſſed in council, the king found a means, in the conſtitution, of eluding the intended humiliation, by not going to the aſſembly. In reality, the conſtitution did not oblige him to open the ſeſſion in perſon, or to go to the aſſembly upon any occaſion. The king preferred this to more vigorous meaſures, which were ever repugnant to his character.

The aſſembly being informed of the king's determination, was now ſenſible, that in endeavouring to degrade him, it had injured itſelf in the public opinion. Theſe conſiderations determined them to repeal the decree, and the king then con-

ſented to go in perſon to the opening of the aſſembly *.

The unquiet and turbulent diſpoſition which this aſſembly diſplayed ſufficiently warned the miniſters to keep themſelves upon their guard, to ſtudy the conſtitution, and to adhere to it ſtrictly; that unfortunately being the only defence they had againſt the various attacks they were likely to meet with. Several of the miniſters having been injured by their correſpondence with and attendance upon the committees of the firſt aſſembly, came to a determination, and with the king's approbation, never to correſpond with the committees, but always with the aſſembly itſelf; which, indeed

* By the decree of the 5th of October 1791, it was ordained, that as often as the king went to the aſſembly, he ſhould place himſelf in an arm-chair, upon the left hand of of the preſident, exactly alike, and on the ſame level with that in which the preſident himſelf ſat. By another article of the ſame decree, when the preſident or any other deputy addreſſed the king, it was to be done by the new appellation of *King of the French*. The ſame was to be uſed in all meſſages to his majeſty. This decree was repealed the very next day, after long and warm debates.

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was appointed by the conſtitution, there being no mention made of committees.

The emigration being at this time conſiderable, and becoming every day more and more ſo, was one of the chief objects of the diſcontent and murmurs of the people. The king, who but too well foreſaw the fatal conſequences it would have, cauſed a proclamation to be publiſhed, recalling all gentlemen who had gone out of the kingdom, and tending to retain thoſe who were inclined to emigrate. He at the ſame time ordered the miniſters of war and the marine, to write a circular letter to the ſame effect, to the officers of their department. This meaſure produced an impreſſion in favour of the king upon the minds of the people; but it was attended with this inconveniency, that it ſuggeſted to the aſſembly, who were then in diſcredit, the means of re-inſtating themſelves in the public favour; and they ſucceeded, by a violent decree againſt emigration.

CHAP. X.

Promotions under the adminiſtration of M. Thevenard.—Duke of Orleans appointed admiral.—Motives of this appointment.—Projected changes in the miniſtry.—Reſignation of M. de Montmorin.—Appointment of M. de Mouſtier to his place.—Afterwards retracted. — Motives.—Meſſrs. de Segur and Barthelemi refuſe the department of foreign affairs.—M. de Leſſart appointed.—Retreat of M. de Portail, war miniſter.—Intrigues to procure the nomination of M. de Narbonne to that place.—The conduct of that miniſter.—Singular propoſal he made to the queen.—My firſt miſunderſtanding with the aſſembly.—Reſult.—Decree againſt the emigrants.—The king refuſes his ſanction.—Meſſage from the king, carried by all the miniſters.

M. THEVENARD, about a fortnight before he reſigned, made a general promotion in the marine, conformable to the

the new organization decreed by the aſſembly; and although this promotion had not been officially declared, yet the moſt material articles, particularly the very remarkable promotion of the duke of Orleans, was known to the public, therefore it was not in my power to make any alteration; and in ſpite of my extreme repugnance to many, I was under the neceſſity of ſigning all the letters addreſſed to the officers included in that promotion. All that I could do, was by an alteration in the expreſſion of the letter, to evince that the promotion had been decided on before my appointment to the adminiſtration. M. Thevenard had hurried this affair, becauſe he believed, as he ſaid to me, that the nomination of the duke of Orleans to the rank of admiral would inſure the king a ſufficient degree of popularity to enable him to keep the new aſſembly in proper bounds.

I was informed by M. de Montmorin, a few days after I entered into the miniſtry, that the changes which the king intended in the council conſiſted of, firſt, The nomination

of M. de Mouſtier to the department of foreign affairs; ſecondly, the diſmiſſion of M. Duportail, miniſter of war; thirdly, the diſmiſſion of the *Garde des Sceaux*, to whom I was to ſucceed, as ſoon as the anſwers were received from ſome perſons whom the king had in view for the department of war and of the marine. M. de Montmorin, in giving up the department of foreign affairs, was to preſerve his place in council, in quality of ancient miniſter, with a ſalary of 50,000 livres.

The only thing which diſpleaſed me in this arrangement, was the idea of being named *Garde des Sceaux*. I declared very plainly to M. de Montmorin, that I never would accept of that place, becauſe my being raiſed to it might be imputed to ambitious views; whereas I wiſhed to have it in my power to ſhew, what was really the caſe, that I had entered into the adminiſtration, in the preſent circumſtances, for no other reaſon but in obedience to the king's repeated orders. And beſides, as the new order of things had not taken place in the marine

marine department, I wiſhed to be appointed to it, becauſe there it would be more in my power to reconcile my determined adherence to the letter of the conſtitution with my obedience to the king; and I begged of M. de Montmorin to repreſent this to his majeſty, as I was not ſufficiently at my eaſe with him, to venture ſpeaking upon a point which might diſpleaſe him.

M. de Mouſtier, miniſter plenipotentiary at Berlin, was recalled, in order to be appointed to the department of foreign affairs, and came in great haſte to Paris, according to his majeſty's orders. Scarcely was the motive of his return known, than intrigues were formed to prevent his nomination. His reputation for talents, and the energy of his character, made him be regarded as dangerous for the revolution, and conſequently animated againſt him all thoſe who ſupported it. This cabal was reinforced by ſome intriguers, raſh enough to deſire places in the adminiſtration; and who, on purpoſe to ſucceed themſelves, uſed every means to injure the character of

every perſon who was called to it. M. de Mouſtier was declared to be a violent ariſtocrat. Some deputies were made to ſpeak againſt his nomination. The king was told that it would have a bad effect in the aſſembly, &c. On the other hand, the *Garde des Sceaux*, jealous of M. de Montmorin's credit with the king, and aſpiring to obtain the chief influence im the choice of miniſters, had been ſenſibly piqued at not being conſulted on my nomination, which, as he told me, he would have prevented. He was no leſs diſpleaſed upon the preſent occaſion, becauſe the king had never ſpoken to him of his intentions reſpecting M. de Mouſtier; and therefore he greatly increaſed the uneaſineſs which had been given to his majeſty on this ſubject. The reſult was, that M. de Mouſtier, inſtead of being miniſter of foreign affairs, was appointed ambaſſador to Conſtantinople, and the Count de Segur to ſucceed M. de Montmorin, who, in ſpite of all my intreaties to engage him to remain in his place, never ceaſed his endeavours to obtain leave to reſign, till at laſt his reſignation

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was accepted. His retreat was, at that time, a misfortune to the king, becauſe it was the moment in which his ſervices might have been moſt uſeful, and in which there was the leaſt inconveniency to have been apprehended from the weakneſs of his character. The king and queen aſſured me that they had obſerved more firmneſs and deciſion in his conduct, ſince my admiſſion into the miniſtry, which was imputed to his confidence in me, and his reliance on my ſupport. In fact, we acted together with unanimity on all occaſions; and what we had agreed to in private was ſeldom oppoſed in the council. It has been remarked, that the laſt months of the year 1791 formed the only period, perhaps, of the revolution, in which the king and council aſſumed the ſtile which became them, with the aſſembly.

The reſignation of M. de Montmorin being accepted, the Count de Segur, who had already returned thanks to the king for his appointment, was to be inſtalled the Sunday following; but an unforeſeen circumſtance

cumſtance made him change his opinion, and threw the king into new difficulties. He happened to go, on Saturday, to the national aſſembly, where he found M. Duportail, who had come, accompanied by all the miniſters, to anſwer certain unfounded accuſations which had been made againſt him. He forgot himſelf ſo far as to enter into an abuſive wrangle with the firebrands of the aſſembly, who, on finding that his impatience had carried him beyond all bounds, attacked him with the moſt groſs abuſe. This revolting ſcene, which M. Duportail entirely owed to his vivacity and want of addreſs, diſguſted M. de Segur ſo much with the office of miniſter, that he ſent his reſignation, or rather his refuſal, to the king, the very next day; and the reaſon he gave was, that he was not endued with ſufficient courage or moderation to bear ſuch attacks as M. Duportail had been expoſed to.

The bad ſucceſs of theſe two nominations brought great diſcredit upon the council, and augmented the king's embarraſſment.

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I again expoſtulated with M. de Montmorin to prevail with him to withdraw his reſignation, which, I gave him to underſtand, was what the king greatly deſired; but I did not ſucceed; and he himſelf propoſed that the king ſhould appoint, in his place, M. Barthelemi, who was then miniſter plenipotentiary in England, and a courier extraordinary was immediately ſent to inform him of his nomination. The papers relating to foreign affairs were, in the interim, placed in the hands of M. de Leſſart; but as M. Barthelemi refuſed the ſituation, M. de Leſſart was definitively appointed to it, leaving the place of *miniſtre d. l'interieure* vacant. M. de Montmorin would have remained in adminiſtration, if the king would have explicitly, and in direct terms, deſired it; but his majeſty was greatly hurt, that a man, with whom he had been bred from his childhood, and whoſe reſignation he had ſo long refuſed to accept, ſhould perſiſt in it; and therefore the king would never condeſcend to ſpeak to him on the ſubject.

The brutality with which the aſſembly received the juſtifications of M. Duportail having determined him to retire from adminiſtration, the friends of Count Louis de Narbonne were extremely active to get him appointed miniſter of war. M. Duport Dutertre and M. de Leſſart took upon themſelves to ſpeak of it to the king, who at firſt rejected the propoſal. "I know M. de Narbonne better than you do," ſaid he to them, "and I know that he is unfit for the miniſtry." The bad ſucceſs of this attempt did not rebuff them. They preſſed me to join them, and to ſpeak to the king in favour of M. de Narbonne. They ſolicited me through M. de Montmorin, who promiſed marvellous great things on the part of M. de Narbonne, whoſe greateſt deſire, as he told me, was to attach himſelf to me, to take my conduct for his model, and to purſue the ſame plans with me, &c. In anſwer to theſe fair ſpeeches, I merely ſaid, that not being acquainted with M. de Narbonne, I could not poſſibly ſay either good

or

or bad of him, and that conſequently all that I could do, was to be ſilent upon the ſubject.

M. de Montmorin, who had flattered himſelf, that in withdrawing from adminiſtration, he ſtill ſhould retain his place in council, ſaw this hope vaniſh. The king, who had the ſame idea, having ſpoken to M. Duport Dutertre and M. de Leſſart upon that arrangement, they aſſured him that it was expreſsly contrary to the conſtitution, and that the aſſembly would not fail to object to it; that beſides, the miniſters of the department being alone reſponſible, ought alone to be admitted to join in the deliberations of the council; and that none of them would conſent to remain and cooperate with one who was not reſponſible. The king, ſtruck with the force of this objection, which had not occurred to him, renounced his plan with regard to M. de Montmorin, who, by this means, found himſelf deprived of his place and reſources. His affairs being in ſuch diſorder, that his debts ſwallowed up his own revenue, I informed

formed his majeſty of this, who granted him the ſum of 50,000 livres a year from the fund of the ſecret expences belonging to the department of foreign affairs.

As the choice of a war miniſter could no longer be deferred, and as M. de Narbonne was the only perſon propoſed to the king, his majeſty was forced to ſurmount the extreme repugnance he had againſt appointing him to that ſituation. The day * on which he was received into the council, the miniſters informed him, in preſence of the king, of a reſolution they had taken againſt having any communication with the committees, but of always correſponding directly with the aſſembly, agreeably to the conſtitution. The motives which were given for this reſolution appeared to him very wiſe, and he promiſed to adhere to it. The very next day, however, he changed his mind, and went to the committee of war, without mentioning his intentions to the king, or to the miniſters. He afterwards

* December 6, 1791.

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gave as a reaſon for his conduct, that a communication with the committees appeared to him, on reflection, the ſureſt means of making the miniſters popular, and conſequently rendering them more powerful and uſeful to his majeſty. I conteſted this opinion, by inſiſting that a popularity acquired in this manner, could only be of ſhort duration; whereas a communication with the committees would perpetually expoſe the miniſters to the greateſt inconveniency, as nothing was ſo eaſy as to miſinterpret their words, and give a falſe colouring to every thing they ſaid; and that their denial could have no weight in the aſſembly againſt the aſſertion of a committee, or of many of its members. That beſides, it was neither conſiſtent with order nor propriety, that the miniſters ſhould give the firſt example of deviating from the conſtitution; and that it was an evident deviation to act in a manner which it did not authorize.

M. de Narbonne was intoxicated with the reception which he had met with at the com-

committee, and with the alacrity with which all he propoſed had been adopted, therefore he did not approve of my reaſons. He went, every day, both to the aſſembly and committees, and obtained every decree he demanded. The patriot journaliſts proclaimed his popularity, and he imagined it was ſo well eſtabliſhed, that he might hope to extend its happy influence upon his colleagues.

In this ſtate of affairs, and a very ſhort time after his appointment as miniſter, he ſet off to viſit the frontiers and the armies.

The miniſters, dazzled, and perhaps jealous of his ſucceſs, flattered themſelves that they might obtain the ſame, by purſuing the ſame path; and from that time, without coming to any formal agreement upon the ſubject, or even conſulting one another, each of them, individually, went occaſionally to the committees. I alone adhered to the agreements we had all made, by which conduct I offended many members of the aſſembly, who conſtrued it into contempt of the committees; and I was not

not long without feeling the effects of their reſentment.

The revolt of the negroes of St. Domingo made it neceſſary to ſend a ſpeedy and conſiderable aſſiſtance. I demanded of the aſſembly, in my own name, and under my own reſponſibility, the neceſſary ſum for this expenſe. The aſſembly rejected my demand, upon pretence that it was not preſented in a conſtitutional form; that it ought to have been made by the king himſelf. The pretenſions of the aſſembly, in this inſtance, being contrary to the conſtitution, preſented to me an opportunity of entering into a conteſt, in which I certainly ſhould have had the advantage; but as this would have brought on long debates on ſome important articles of the conſtitution, and as ſuch a diſcuſſion muſt have conſiderably retarded the ſuccours to St. Domingo, which were ſo immediately required, I thought proper to defer the conteſt, determining, in my own mind, to ſeize the firſt favourable opportunity of reviving it. In the mean time, I propoſed to the king to

repreſent to the aſſembly, "that the form in which I had preſented the demand of a neceſſary fund for ſending aſſiſtance to St. Domingo was not contrary to the conſtitution, and deſiring that they would take an affair of ſuch importance into their immediate conſideration."

The king conſented to write a letter * to that purport, and the aſſembly triumphed on the occaſion, regarding it as a formal demand made by the king of the ſum which had been irregularly demanded by me, and conſequently an acquieſcence in their cenſure of my demand.

This did not, however, prevent me from preſenting, in the ſame form, a few days afterwards, a demand of the ſame nature, relative to an armament extraordinary at Toulon. The aſſembly did not heſitate in rejecting this ſecond demand as they had done the firſt, and even declaring it unconſtitutional. Some deputies obſerved, with indignation, that it was aſtoniſhing, after the leſſon I had received, that I ſo ſoon fell

* November 14, 1791.

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into the ſame error; on which account I was pretty generally cenſured. My colleagues reproached me for a conduct which threw diſcredit on the adminiſtration; and as the conſtitution was not well underſtood by the public, few doubted but that the decree of the aſſembly was conformable to it, and that my diſmiſſion would be the inevitable conſequence of my headſtrong conduct; for in theſe terms they qualified the ſtep I had taken.

A ſecond letter, from the king to the aſſembly, expoſed the fallacy of all this reaſoning, for it contained a full explanation of every article of the conſtitution, applicable to this and every other caſe in which it was neceſſary for his majeſty to make application directly from himſelf to the aſſembly; by which it appeared, that my addreſſing them as miniſter, in this particular caſe, was according to the form preſcribed by the conſtitution, and that the decree of cenſure was the only irregularity in the whole tranſaction. The conſequence evidently was, that unleſs the aſſembly repealed their

firſt decree, I could not be conſidered as reſponſible for the miſchiefs which might reſult from not ſending ſuccours to St. Domingo *. This letter was expreſſed in a ſtyle which the council had not, for above a year, ventured to make the king aſſume; and the aſſembly were a good deal diſconcerted. They got rid of this embarraſſment, by ſending the letter to be anſwered by the conſtitutional committee; which, however, was never anſwered. The aſſembly at the ſame time declared that this letter muſt be conſidered as a direct demand made by his majeſty, and the ſum which I required at firſt was accordingly granted.

All parties, except the Jacobins, applauded the energy diſplayed by the king on this occaſion; and the obſtinacy and ignorance of the aſſembly was ſo apparent, that it fell as much, in the preſent inſtance, in the eſtimation of the public, as it had done, a month before, by its inſolent attempt of ſeating the king on the ſame level with their preſident.

* *Vide* the Appendix, No. II.

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The public attention was ſoon after engroſſed by a violent decree, to deprive the king's brothers, as emigrants, of their right of ſucceeding to the throne, or even of being appointed regents of the kingdom, in caſe of a minority. The Abbé Fauchet, about the ſame time, diſtinguiſhed himſelf by an abſurd denunciation againſt M. de Leſſart, miniſter *de l'interieur*. The animoſity of the Jacobin party was the greater againſt me, becauſe of the king's letter, of which I was known to be the author, and alſo becauſe I was the only miniſter who refuſed to have any communication with the committees. They thought proper, however, to let the advantage which I had gained over the aſſembly be forgotten, and not to attack me till I had loſt ſome of my popularity, which I very ſoon did, through the injudicious zeal of the ariſtocratic journaliſts, who greatly injured me by their exaggerated encomiums.

At this time M. de Narbonne returned from his expedition to the frontiers. He had only been a fortnight abſent. All the

world was ſurpriſed at the rapidity with which he had accompliſhed ſo long a journey in ſo ſhort a time; yet he gave as circumſtantial an account of the ſtate of the places and armies, as an inſpector could have given after a careful examination of ſix months; giving, at the ſame time, ſuch a flattering repreſentation of the ſtate of the army and forts, that his brilliant report excited the moſt lively enthuſiaſm in the aſſembly. At this period, when a war with the Emperor appeared almoſt inevitable, a miniſter, who diſplayed ſo much activity, and ſeemed to poſſeſs ſo many reſources, inſpired the greateſt ſecurity. This report being printed, and diſtributed through the capital, raiſed the popularity of M. de Narbonne and his credit in the aſſembly, to ſuch a degree, that his friends began to think the war department a field too narrow for his talents. Prompted by his natural vanity, and by the counſels of Madame de Stael, M. de Narbonne demanded an audience of the queen, with whom he flattered himſelf he poſſeſſed more influence than he had with

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the king, who never appeared to have any confidence in him. His object in this audience was to read a memorial to her majeſty, upon the actual ſtate of France, and the critical poſition in which the king ſtood. After expatiating on the difficulty of reeſtabliſhing the king's authority, and ſaving the ſtate, he propoſed, as the only remedy, to place at the head of government, in quality of firſt miniſter, a man who, either by good fortune and addreſs, or by real merit, had acquired a reputation for abilities, wiſdom, activity, &c. and who poſſeſſed ſuch a degree of popularityas to overawe and direct the aſſembly; one who, in addition to theſe advantages, poſſeſſed an unſhaken fidelity, an unbounded attachment to the king, and to all that concerned his majeſty's intereſt. Such a perſon being once found, the preſent emergency required that the king and queen ſhould place an entire and excluſive confidence in him, but without allowing it to appear; and that their majeſties ſhould devolve on him the power of forming a new adminiſtration, and of naming to all the

different employments the perſons he judged moſt capable.

"All this is very fine," ſaid the queen, after having heard the memorial, "but unfortunately impracticable; for where can we find ſuch an unparalleled and admirable perſon for a miniſter? And even if it were poſſible to find ſuch a one, the king could not give him all the powers you mention, becauſe, by the conſtitution, his majeſty has not the right of appointing a *prime* miniſter. He is obliged to name ſix, each of whom muſt have the full direction in his own department."

This objection did not diſconcert M. de Narbonne. He was very certain, he ſaid, that the king might eaſily prevail on the aſſembly to depart from the ſtrict letter of the conſtitution, for the ſake of getting ſuch a man at the head of affairs.

"Well," ſaid her majeſty, "ſuppoſe the aſſembly to have this complaiſance, ſtill I aſk, where is the wonderful man to be found?"

To this M. de Narbonne, with apparent confuſion, and with the voice of modeſty, anſwered,

anſwered, "that many people ſuppoſed that he himſelf, whether from nature, or education, or good fortune, or all three, nearly united all the qualities he had enumerated."

The queen, burſting into laughter, only ſaid theſe words, *êtes vous fou, M. de Narbonne?* After this, he exhauſted his eloquence to convince her majeſty, that what he propoſed proceeded only from an exceſs of zeal for the king's ſervice; and remarking that ſhe ſtill ſeemed to hold his propoſal in contempt, he fell on his knees, and intreated her, with tears, to conſider his conduct with indulgence.

The following day the queen gave me an account of this extraordinary ſcene, in the very words I have related it.

It will readily be imagined, that M. de Narbonne did not mention this ſtep, nor its conſequences, to any of his colleagues*. He always preſerved, with them, that ſtile of pleaſantry and eaſy gaiety which characterize him. He expreſſed a particular regard

* The queen having deſired me not to ſpeak of this, I did not mention it to the other miniſters.

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for me, and told me, that he greatly approved of the conduct I had adopted with regard to the aſſembly, and that he would be guided by no other advice than mine. His intention might poſſibly be ſincere, but he did not long perſevere in it; for the very next day, having to demand an extraordinary fund from the aſſembly, for the expenſe of the troops to be ſent to St. Domingo, he neither ſpoke of it in the council nor to his colleagues; but he propoſed to the king to ſign a letter, in which his majeſty ſhould demand the neceſſary fund *in his own name*. M. de Narbonne's reaſon for this was, that the conſtitutional committee, not having decided upon the form in which the demand ought to be made, it was prudent not to renew the debate at preſent, as it would only retard the expedition. The king did not doubt but that the meaſure was concerted with the other miniſters, yet he heſitated before he ſigned this letter; and when he was prevailed upon, he added a poſtſcript, in which he declared himſelf ſtill of opinion, that the

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form adopted by the miniſter of marine was conſtitutional.

It would be difficult to calculate the fatal effect which this letter produced. It was conſidered as a proof of weakneſs and inconſiſtency on the king's part, and of a want of unanimity among the miniſters. From that time we began to be attacked with greater inſolence.

The decrees pronounced againſt the king's brothers had not entirely ſatisfied the Jacobins, who governed the majority of the aſſembly by their influence or threats: their rancour required another violent decree againſt the emigrants, and the aſſembly ſatisfied them in this point, by iſſuing one, which not only exceeded its powers, but was even contrary to the ſpirit of the conſtitution. This was ſo evident, that after a minute diſcuſſion, the king's miniſters unanimouſly adviſed him to refuſe his ſanction. But as the king had never yet employed this prerogative, the miniſters were of opinion, that to prevent its having a bad effect upon the public, and likewiſe

likewiſe that it might ſtrike the aſſembly with ſome degree of awe, it would be prudent to give to this meaſure an unuſual degree of ſolemnity, by ordering the refuſal of the ſanction to be carried to the aſſembly in the form of a royal meſſage, by all the miniſters, whoſe preſence would mark their unanimous agreement; and the *Garde des Sceaux*, who ſhould deliver the meſſage, might inſert in his ſpeech ſome ſentences, enforcing the wiſdom and juſtice of his majeſty's motives for refuſing his ſanction to the decree.

The 12th of November being the day fixed for the meſſage of the king, all the miniſters met at the houſe of the *Garde des Sceaux*, that they might go together to the aſſembly; before we ſet out, he called for and drank two large glaſſes of water. I was afraid he was ill; but on mentioning my apprehenſions, he anſwered, "No, it is only a precaution I take, every time I go to the aſſembly. The blood boils in my veins when I hear theſe fellows ſpeak; and if I did not take ſomething to cool myſelf, I ſhould

I ſhould get into a paſſion, and be apt to tell them very diſagreeable truths."

"I hope," ſaid I, "all this water will only moderate the paſſion, without weakening thoſe truths you have to tell them, be they agreeable or not."

"Fear not," replied he.

The appearance of all the miniſters, and a meſſage from the king, (the firſt the aſſembly had ever received, and of which the object was entirely unknown,) excited a general and profound ſilence in the hall and in the tribunes. That of the tribunes could only be imputed to curioſity; but in the ſilence of the aſſembly there was at leaſt as much uneaſineſs as ſurpriſe. The *Garde des Sceaux* began by laying upon the table the different decrees which the king had ſanctioned, among which there were two or three which the aſſembly had expected, for ſome time, with a good deal of impatience. He terminated this firſt part of his miſſion by informing the aſſembly, that with reſpect to the decree againſt the emigrants, the *king would examine it*; which ſignified,

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in conſtitutional language, that the decree was refuſed. He then drew from his pocket the paper which contained his diſcourſe. Unluckily the water operated, at that moment, with ſo much violence, that his colour forſook him, his hands trembled, and his voice failed him ſo much, that he could hardly read. And what was ſtill more unlucky, the firſt phraſe, inſtead of relating to the ſubject of the meſſage, mentioned the refuſal of the ſanction. He was not permitted to proceed farther. A general murmur aroſe. All the deputies ſpoke at once. Every one inſiſted on being heard, but no ſilence was to be obtained. They all vociferouſly exclaimed, "Mr. Le Preſident, we cannot liſten to this meſſage." "This meſſage is unconſtitutional." "It is the motives for refuſing the ſanction." "Call the miniſter of juſtice to order." "Mr. Le Preſident, the conſtitution—" "Mr. Le Preſident, allow me to make a motion of order." This tumult laſted ſeven or eight minutes. The miniſters waited the iſſue of it ſtanding.

At length the preſident put it to the vote, Whether they ſhould hear the meſſage, or paſs to the order of the day. The *Garde des Sceaux*, entirely diſconcerted by this tumultuous ſcene, ſat down with the other miniſters, giving up all hopes of being heard.

To prevent ſuch an unexpected and unfortunate termination of the buſineſs, I aſked leave to ſpeak. They refuſed to hear me, and the motion for the order of the day was carried; after which the preſident told me that I was now allowed to ſpeak. I roſe and ſaid, that I now had nothing to ſay; but had I been heard before the laſt motion was carried, I ſhould have informed the aſſembly, that the object of the king's meſſage was to acquaint them with the new meaſures adopted by his majeſty for ſtopping the emigration. This renewed the tumult; one party inſiſting on hearing the meſſage, and recalling the decree juſt pronounced; the other exclaiming for its execution. But the miniſters remaining paſſive, and the *Garde des Sceaux*, who ought to have repreſented to the aſſembly, that they

they had no right, by the conſtitution, to refuſe to hear any meſſage from the king, being ſilent, the order of the day was adopted.

The ſingle ſentence which I had pronounced on this occaſion was incorrectly given in the *Moniteur*, in which, after the words "*ſtopping the emigration*," which I had actually pronounced, the editor of the paper added what I had not pronounced, namely, the words "*of the officers of marine.*" I expoſtulated againſt this falſe account, in a letter which I cauſed to be inſerted in the ſame Journal, and in which I affirmed, that I had not mentioned the officers of marines; and that as none of them had deſerted their poſts ſince my entering the miniſtry, there was no need of propoſing to the king any new meaſure reſpecting them. It will appear in the ſequel, what animoſity this letter, innocent as it was, excited againſt me.

CHAP. XI.

Nomination of M. Cahier de Gerville.—The miniſters dine at his houſe, with Petion, and ſome of the members of the municipality. —Decree againſt the prieſts.—The king refuſes his ſanction.—Denunciation againſt me.—The conſequences of this affair.—Expulſion of Bonjour.

M. CAHIER DE GERVILLE, who was appointed miniſter of home affairs, in the place of M. de Leſſart *, was formerly an advocate in the parliament of Paris. Although his talents did not exceed mediocrity, he was eſteemed for his probity and aſſiduity in buſineſs. He was then ſubſtitute of the *procureur de la commune*, and enjoyed great popularity. This conſideration determined his friend, the *Garde des Sceaux*, to propoſe his appointment, as a means of rendering the king more

* November 30, 1791.

popular. The effect of ſuch temporizing meaſures, however agreeable for a ſhort time, is ſeldom of durable utility. The preſent ſtate of affairs required boldneſs and intrepidity. The people generally place their confidence, particularly in times of revolution, in perſons who poſſeſs ſuch qualities; for which reaſon, in popular aſſemblies, we conſtantly find that the majority declare in favour of the orator who has the beſt lungs, and is moſt violent in his opinions.

If the king had determined upon ſome vigorous meaſure, it would certainly have been wiſe to have preceded it by an act of popularity. But theſe multiplied conceſſions, without any act of vigour, were much more hurtful than uſeful, as the king acquired only a ſhort-lived popularity, at the expence of dignity, and of the ſmall remains of power he ſtill poſſeſſed.

A few days after M. Cahier de Gerville's appointment, he invited the miniſters to dinner at his ſmall lodgings in the *Rue Beaubourg*. Petion, who had juſt been elected mayor of Paris, was alſo invited, with ſome members

members of the municipality. The intention of the new miniſter was to aſſociate us in his popularity, or at leaſt to prove to us, that what the *Garde des Sceaux* had ſaid was not exaggerated. The mayor and members of the municipality ſeemed to examine us minutely, and had reaſon to be ſatisfied with our words and behaviour, for we ſhewed them great politeneſs, and treated them as if they had been our companions. We played at billiards with them, and were always of their opinion. I particularly fixed my attention upon Petion, for the king and queen were prejudiced, at that time, in his favour, and had wiſhed him to be elected in preference to M. de la Fayette, when they ſtood candidates for the mayoralty. As Petion and I were the ſtrongeſt at billiards, we played ſeveral parties together, and I was for ſome time left alone with him. His countenance, which at firſt ſight appeared open and agreeable, upon a nearer examination, was inſipid and devoid of expreſſion. His want of information and heavy elocution, meanly trivial or abſurdly

bombaſt, made me conſider him as a man by no means dangerous. I even imagined, that by flattering his vanity or ambition, he might be rendered uſeful to the king. His conduct has proved how much I was deceived; and I cannot, even at this diſtance of time, reflect without pain on my having been deceived by ſo ſilly a knave.

The aſſembly, whoſe credit ſeemed ever ſupported by acts of violence, had paſſed a decree, enjoining the unconſtitutional prieſts to take a new oath, or to quit the kingdom. The biſhops, then at Paris, were convinced that the king, who had already manifeſted the deepeſt regret for having ſanctioned former decrees againſt the clergy, would be happy to have motives and means for refuſing that one. They therefore determined to draw up a memorial againſt it, and applied to me to preſent it to his majeſty. I had a *private* correſpondence with the biſhop of Uſes on this ſubject; for at that time a miniſter could have no public communication with a biſhop, without awakening ſuſpicion againſt himſelf.

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The king appeared much affected by this memorial, and ſaid to me, with the energy which he ever ſhewed in the cauſe of religion, "They may be aſſured I never will ſanction it: but the difficulty is to know whether I ought ſimply to refuſe my aſſent, and to aſſign the motives of my refuſal, or to temporize, on account of the preſent circumſtances. Endeavour," continued he, "to diſcover the opinion of your colleagues, before the ſubject is mentioned in the council." I remarked to the king, that he was not, by the conſtitution, obliged to aſſign the motives of his refuſal; and that although the aſſembly ought to be pleaſed to ſee his majeſty give up that important prerogative, it was ſo ill diſpoſed, that it might refuſe to liſten to his motives, and might even reproach him with this breach of the conſtitution, as if it were a violation of his oath; that to temporize was only a diſplay of weakneſs, and would encourage the aſſembly to become ſtill more enterpriſing; and beſides that, a ſimple negative was at once more ſure and more proper. The affair

was diſcuſſed the day after, in a committee of the miniſters, and the indiſpenſable neceſſity of a negative was acknowledged by all.

At the following council, this meaſure was propoſed to the king, who adopted it, with extreme ſatisfaction. But this interval of happineſs was interrupted by the propoſal which the miniſter of the home department made to him, of appointing conſtitutional prieſts to the queen's chapel and his own, as the ſureſt means of ſilencing the malecontents, and convincing the people of his ſincere attachment to the conſtitution. "No, ſir, no," ſaid the king, in a firm voice; "let no one ſpeak to me upon this ſubject; ſince liberty of worſhip is made general, certainly I ought to enjoy it as well as others."

The warmth with which he pronounced theſe words aſtoniſhed us, and ſilenced M. Cahier de Gerville.

The denunciation againſt M. de Leſſart was rejected by the aſſembly, after hearing his juſtification, in ſpite of the declamations

of Briſſot and Condorcet, the calumnies of the Abbé Fauchet, and the wiſhes of Madame de Stael. That lady was deſirous that M. de Narbonne ſhould be appointed to the department of foreign affairs. So far from attempting to conceal this, ſhe had the ſincerity to own it to M. de Leſſart himſelf, in a letter of four pages, in which ſhe endeavoured to prove, "that his honour, the welfare of the ſtate, and the king's intereſt, required his reſigning a place, which his bad health and his character rendered him unequal to, in circumſtances ſo difficult." This letter was read in the miniſterial committee by M. de Leſſart himſelf.

The ſtorm which had been ſo long preparing againſt me at length broke out, and Cavelier, clerk of the office of marine at Breſt, came forward as my accuſer. This man, who was as great a knave as the revolution has produced, had nothing more urgent, upon his firſt arrival in Paris, than to come and pay his reſpects to me, and to demand a more advantageous place than that which he was then in.

"Are not you a deputy?" ſaid I.

"Yes," replied he; "but I do not regard that."

"But do you not regard the conſtitution, neither?" ſaid I.

"How do you mean?" reſumed he.

"I mean, that you ought to know," returned I, "that the conſtitution does not admit of your filling a ſuperior employment, until a certain time after the expiration of your deputation; conſequently you can no longer inſiſt upon your demand, as I cannot grant it without violating the conſtitution."

"You are very rigid, ſir," ſaid he.

"Not at all; I am only faithful to my oath," ſaid I, and left him.

Such was my accuſer; and the pretence of his denunciation was the aſſertion which I had inſerted in the *Moniteur*, concerning the officers of the marine. But the real motive was to ſtop the reforms which I had announced or ordered in the principal departments of the adminiſtration of the ſea-ports, where an immenſe ſyſtem of pillaging,

laging, and all kinds of fraud exiſted. It was thereſore eaſy for Cavelier to excite againſt me all who, like himſelf, profited by ſuch abuſes; and accordingly memorials, ſubſcribed by many names, ſupporting his accuſation, were ſent from Breſt and Toulon. Thoſe employed at the port of Rochefort, however, had the firmneſs and the integrity to reſiſt a'l the manœuvres of Cavelier and the other Jacobins, for obtaining from them a memorial, in the ſame ſtrain with thoſe of Breſt and Toulon. On the contrary, they tranſmitted to the king, to the aſſembly, and to myſelf, addreſſes, in which they declared, " that having been ſtrongly ſolicited to join my accuſer, truth and juſtice obliged them to acknowledge, that they had only praiſes to beſtow upon the wiſdom and activity of my adminiſtration."

The memorials which came from the ports of Breſt and Toulon were ſent to the committee of marine, as was that of Cavelier, who was a member of that committee, and who cauſed himſelf to be appointed reporter

reporter of the whole affair. He was powerfully ſeconded by Malaſſis and Rouyer. The firſt was printer to the marine at Breſt, and had accumulated above 600,000 livres, by the abuſes which exiſted in that employment. The ſecond was a deputy from Niſmes, as remarkable, in the aſſembly, for the ſtrength of his voice, as for his audacity and ſtupidity. The chief confidant of this man was one Eſmenard, a journaliſt, who was the framer of the motions which this noiſy deputy vociferated from the tribunes.

This ſame journaliſt was alſo known to me. He had ſolicited the office of conſul, and confeſſed to me, that Rouyer's violence aroſe from his hopes, that if I ſhould be deprived of my office, it would be given to a certain friend of his own, from whoſe influence, as ſoon as he ſhould be appointed miniſter of the marine, Rouyer expected to obtain the croſs of St. Louis, of which he was very ambitious, although he had never ſerved; and he alſo expected, by the ſame influence, to get a contract for furniſhing

niſhing proviſions for the navy for a particular company, who had promiſed him a reward of a hundred thouſand crowns, in caſe he ſucceeded.

I was ſtill ſo much affected by the rude and indecent conduct of the aſſembly towards M. du Portail, of the inſolent calumnies of the Abbé Fauchet, with reſpect to M. de Leſſart, and with the weakneſs which thoſe miniſters had ſhewn in their defence, that I ardently wiſhed for an opportunity of expreſſing my indignation againſt theſe contemptible denunciators; and I can ſay with truth, that the accuſation of Cavelier gave me infinitely more pleaſure than pain. My anſwer was ſoon ready. I went to the aſſembly the 5th of December, and pronounced, with the utmoſt vehemence, a diſcourſe, in which the following phraſes (addreſſed, with a look of the moſt profound contempt, to the Abbé Fauchet) were generally applauded: "I have waited with impatience, until a formal accuſation againſt myſelf ſhould furniſh me with an opportunity of ſubmitting to the wiſdom and to the juſtice

juſtice of the national aſſembly ſome reflections, to induce them to receive with circumſpection the perpetual accuſations, ſo often unfoundedly renewed, againſt the principal agents of the executive power. It belongs, gentlemen, to your dignity, to prove to all France, that this auguſt temple of liberty is not a poſt from which the envenomed arrows of calumny can with impunity be darted againſt innocence, and the beſt friends of the country. A denunciation founded upon truth is a duty, when it can be uſeful to the public; but calumny is a crime which ſhould ever be purſued by the vengeance of the laws, wherever it ſeeks refuge. The privilege of wounding the perſon, or attacking the life of a citizen, ſhould belong to no one. But if this horrid privilege were allowed to exiſt, its moſt criminal abuſe would be to direct it againſt thoſe employed in the public ſervice, becauſe it would oblige them to conſume, in their own defence, that time which they owe to their country. In ſhort, gentlemen, it is the intereſt of the conſtitution, and of

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its trueſt friends, that it ſhould be executed. To the king is entruſted the important care of watching over it. The miniſters are his chief agents, and they ought ever to be treated with becoming reſpect. To connive at any attack againſt the dignity of their characters, is to weaken the ſprings of government, and tends to deſtroy the authority of the national repreſentation itſelf. Nevertheleſs, if the numerous enemies, which the ſtrict execution of our duty to the public may raiſe againſt us, expect to overcome our zeal by their calumnies, they will be diſappointed; for I will take upon me to declare, in the name of all my colleagues, that we conſider ſuch attacks, from ſuch a quarter, as honourable for us, and of courſe they will rather animate than depreſs our exertions."

The marine committee, puzzled to refute the proofs I had brought, and the facts I had eſtabliſhed, in my defence, did not preſent their report of the accuſation againſt me till the end of February, though the denunciation had been made in the month

of

of November. After the report was read in the aſſembly, Cavelier, and five others of the committee, propoſed a decree of accuſation againſt me; but this was unanimouſly rejected. They then propoſed, that I ſhould be declared to have loſt the confidence of the nation; but this alſo was rejected, by a majority of two-thirds of the members. They then demanded the *appel nominal*; and as it was paſt twelve at night, many of the deputies, convinced I ſhould ſtill have a ſufficient majority, retired. There was, in fact, a majority, but of fifteen only. On the following morning, at the opening of the aſſembly, when there were only two hundred members preſent, a decree was propoſed and paſſed, to preſent a memorial to the king, containing the cauſes of the aſſembly's diſſatisfaction with me; and M. Herault de Sechelles was mean enough to undertake to draw up this memorial. The ſucceſs of this manœuvre was not yet ſufficient for my enemies. There was hardly a day paſſed, in which complaints of my adminiſtration did not arrive,

arrive, through their means, from the different ſea-ports; but theſe accuſations were ſo abſurd, and ſo eaſily refuted, that they did not give the ſmalleſt uneaſineſs, or cauſe me to deviate a hair's-breadth from the line of conduct I had traced for myſelf.

The following inſtance, among many, is a ſpecimen of the means employed againſt me: An officer, named d'Eſtimauville, was recalled from India, upon account of a private quarrel. Being, ſoon after his arrival in Paris, deſtitute of money, he addreſſed a memorial to me, demanding to be comprehended in the diſtribution of a gratification granted by the aſſembly to about twenty ſoldiers, who had been ſent back to France from Pondicherry, by M. de Freſnes the governor, upon account of ſeditious practices. The decree, granting this ſhameful gratification, contained the names of thoſe who were to ſhare in it. I could not add the name of M. d'Eſtimauville to ſuch a liſt, without diſhonouring him and expoſing myſelf. But his preſſing neceſſity

prevented

prevented him from weighing the motives of my refuſal, and he complained loudly of it as an act of harſhneſs and injuſtice. Some time after, he fell ſick. The Jacobins being informed that there exiſted an individual who had a complaint againſt me, made him be ſought after every where. One of their agents at laſt diſcovered his lodgings, in a miſerable little chamber, to which he was confined by poverty as well as ſickneſs. The agent introduced himſelf, and told him, that a committee being informed that he had cauſe of complaint againſt M. Bertrand, had deputed him to receive his depoſition againſt that miniſter, and, at the ſame time, to give him the aſſiſtance of which he ſtood ſo much in need. The agent accompanied theſe words with a purſe of gold, which he laid upon the table. This propoſal awakened in the mind of M. d'Eſtimauville the ſentiments of honour natural to him. Indignant at being thought capable of ſerving as an inſtrument of hatred to the Jacobins, he rejected their purſe and turned their agent out of doors.

He

He likewiſe gave a public account of the affair, in a letter to the preſident of the national aſſembly, which was inſerted in ſeveral journals *.

This conduct, which was ſo much the more commendable, as it was really dangerous, intereſted all perſons of honour in his favour, and procured him aſſiſtance which he might accept without bluſhing.

This increaſed the rage of the Jacobins againſt me; but the more pains they took to diſturb my tranquillity, the more I affected to be at my eaſe. My houſe was open to the beſt company twice a week. I gave frequent dinners, and ſometimes concerts, which began exactly at the hour of the evening ſitting of the aſſembly; ſo that my attention was engroſſed by harmonious ſounds, at the very time when the hall of the aſſembly reſounded with violent declamations againſt me. Theſe declamations often originated in my own office, where I had, unluckily, more than one

* See the Journals and Mercury of January and February 1792.

Jacobin; not to mention the clerk Bonjour, whoſe expulſion would have been one of the firſt acts of my adminiſtration, if the king had not feared the conſequences of ſuch a ſtep. His majeſty inſiſted upon having it deferred, until I could find the means of diſmiſſing him, without expoſing myſelf to danger. With a view to this, I deviſed a new plan of arrangement in my office, more œconomical than the former, in which the department of the funds, of which Bonjour was firſt clerk, was entirely ſuppreſſed. At the ſame time, I diſcovered a piece of knavery committed by him, and of which I had ſufficient proofs to have ſubjected him to ſhame and puniſhment.

My new plan of arrangement having been laid before the council, and ſigned by the king, I delayed the execution until Bonjour's accounts for December were examined. When I had finiſhed that buſineſs, I informed him of that part of the new plan in which he was intereſted. The moment he underſtood that his department was ſuppreſſed, the moſt violent in-

dications of rage appeared in his countenance. He was for ſome time unable to ſpeak; but when he had regained the uſe of his tongue, he told me "that the king might, if he would, ſuppreſs his department, but that he could not deprive him of his ſituation of firſt clerk, becauſe he was the oldeſt clerk in the marine office, and that he had decrees in his favour, which he knew how to make advantage of."

"I hope," anſwered I, calmly, "that I alſo know how to make the king's orders be executed. I ſhall give you notice of them to-morrow morning, at nine o'clock. Don't fail to be at the office."

The next day I went there, accompanied by two clerks, whom I foreſaw I ſhould ſtand in need of. I ordered him, in the king's name, to give up the titles, papers, and documents of his department, and the keys of all the cloſets, preſſes, and other repoſitories of his papers. He anſwered, with more coolneſs than he had ſhewn the preceding day, that he had conſulted his friends, and lawyers very well informed

upon the ſubject, who had all adviſed him not to obey this order, and that he would act accordingly. After having in vain endeavoured to make him hear reaſon, I drew up a formal account of his refuſal, deſiring him to dictate, and afterwards to ſign his anſwers. This he did accordingly; after which, I ordered that a juſtice of the ſection ſhould be brought directly, to take an inventory of all his papers, and ſeal up his repoſitories, according to the forms of law, and at the expence of Bonjour. This meaſure, which his friends, it is probable, had not foreſeen, diſconcerted him greatly.

"How, ſir? at my expence?" cried he.

"Yes, undoubtedly, ſir. Don't imagine that the nation is to pay for your diſobedience."

"If that is the caſe, there are my papers and my keys. Take every thing," ſaid he.

"No, ſir," anſwered I, "I will take nothing; but I will receive from you whatever the orders of your ſovereign ſhall oblige you to put into my hands;" and I received, accordingly, all that he had to give

give up; and a liſt was made, which he ſigned.

This buſineſs, which laſted two hours, being over, I produced my proofs againſt him, and made him acknowledge the writing before the two clerks, whom I had brought with me.

"You have made me," ſaid I, "loſe a great deal of time; and were I to treat you as you deſerve, it ſhould coſt you dear. The firſt of theſe papers is a memorial of yours to the Marechal de Caſtries, by which you perſuaded him to grant to a contractor 300,000 livres, who aſked 600,000, under the falſe pretence that he was 600,000 livres in advance to government; whilſt the ſecond, written in your own hand, proves that you, at that time, knew government to be 500,000 livres in advance to him. He died, ſoon after, a bankrupt; and the government loſt 800,000 livres by your negligence or treachery. My memorial on this ſubject is ready, which I will addreſs to the aſſembly, if you make any complaint about your diſmiſſion."

This was enough for him; and far from murmuring, I heard that he every where applauded the new organization of the marine office; of which, the greateſt advantage, in my eyes, was the removal of this worthleſs man. The ſame day an affair took place, which, although of leſs importance, produced a very good effect in my office, and re-eſtabliſhed the ſubordination which the frenzy of the revolution had conſiderably weakened.

A young clerk, who had obtained a place in the marine office, through the intereſt of one of the queen's waiting-women, came and complained to me, in a very cavalier manner, for not having ſufficiently augmented his ſalary, although I had, in reality, very nearly doubled it.

"If you are not ſatisfied with the augmentation," ſaid I, without taking my eyes from the paper on which I was writing, "to oblige you, I ſhall reſtore you to your former ſalary."

"You ſeem to be in jeſt, but I am in earneſt," ſaid he, very impertinently.

"Very

"Very well, ſir," added I, "then I muſt inform you that I am in earneſt alſo; and I now tell you, very ſeriouſly, to make uſe of another ſtyle when you ſpeak to me, for I will not permit you to continue that which you have uſed."

"In what ſtyle muſt I ſpeak to you, ſir? we are all *citizens*. I am a free man, I hope."

"Yes, ſir, perfectly free; ſo entirely ſo, that I now inform you, that you belong no more to this office: ſo you are free to go where you pleaſe; for it is to be hoped that I may uſe the freedom of diſmiſſing a clerk, with whom I am diſſatisfied."

He went out threatening me that he would have the queen informed. When I mentioned the affair to her majeſty, ſhe declared that ſhe did not ſo much as know him, having never before heard his name; and that I had done well in diſmiſſing him.

It was to ſome fellows of this ſtamp, and ſeveral of them in ſimilar ſituations, clerks

and ſecretaries, that the greateſt atrocities of the revolution are to be attributed.

At the time that I turned off theſe two worthleſs fellows, I had the misfortune to loſe the reſpectable M. Malezieu, whom I regretted the more, as his death was haſtened by chagrin for the perſecutions raiſed againſt me, which he thought had been occaſioned by the numbers of *congés* he had perſuaded me to grant. I in vain aſſured him that I had no cauſe to reproach him, for I was ſatisfied of the juſtice of every act he had ever propoſed to me. But the mortal blow was already ſtruck, and he fell a prey to the delicacy and ſenſibility of his mind.

CHAP. XII.

Conſtitutional guards of the king.—Propoſals to the king, reſpecting the formation of his houſehold.—The treaſury inform the king that they could no longer pay any part of the civil liſt in ſpecie.—My propoſal to the king for procuring him money.—Inſubordination in the ports.—M. de Lajaille is aſſaſſinated at Breſt.—My complaint to the aſſembly, and to the Garde des Sceaux, *on that ſubject.—A viſit from the preſident of the marine committee.—The committee determine upon a decree of accuſation againſt me.—I am acquainted with this at midnight.—Shameful conduct of the* Intendant de Marine *at Breſt.*

As Bonjour's treachery to M. de Fleurieu had not been puniſhed, but, on the contrary, had obliged M. Thevenard to be more attentive to him than he would otherwiſe have been, the expulſion of that clerk was conſidered as an act of remarkable boldneſs.

boldneſs. The king and queen, however, expreſſed their ſatisfaction. I was congratulated upon it as a victory by many of my friends, and my other clerks thanked me for having freed them from the diſgrace of having ſo worthleſs an aſſociate. So much were all ideas of courage and energy loſt, at this period, particularly in the minds of the miniſters, that the ſlight merit of not acting as a coward was admired as heroiſm.

A ſhort time after the riſing of the firſt aſſembly, the king employed himſelf in forming a plan for raiſing the eighteen hundred men, decreed by the conſtitution for his houſehold troops. He deliberated long on the beſt method of executing this. The neceſſity of making great ſacrifices to popularity induced him to compoſe this guard of officers and ſoldiers taken half from the national guards, and half from the line: but by a miſtake, of which the conſequences have been very fatal, inſtead of chooſing that half, which was to be taken from the national guards, out of the body of national guards

guards of Paris, where it was of great importance that he ſhould be popular, and where the character of thoſe choſen could be better known, his majeſty was prevailed upon to allow a certain number to be named by each department of France. The effect was, that thoſe departments where men of worth preſided, ſent very good men; but others ſent a ſet of worthleſs fellows, who, ſoon after their arrival at Paris, were received in the Jacobin club, where they were prompted to make daily accuſations, ridiculous in reality, but very fit to excite the people againſt their comrades of the king's guard, which at length brought about the fatal decree of the 30th of May, by which the whole body of the king's houſehold troops were diſmiſſed, and their commander, the duke of Briſſac, accuſed and ſent priſoner to Orleans.

The formation of theſe houſehold troops excited the moſt lively jealouſy among the national guards at Paris. Continual diſputes occurred between the two corps, which would certainly have occaſioned bloodſhed,

bloodſhed, had not the king ordained that they ſhould do duty at the palace alternately; aſſuring them, at the ſame time, that the higheſt proof they could give him of their attachment would be to live amicably together. The new guard did every thing in their power to cement an union, ſo neceſſary to the ſafety of the royal family: but it happened too often that ſome of the national guards, more envious or irritable than the reſt, complained that the king and queen ſpoke oftener, and with more complacency, to the new guards than to them. The conſtraint and vexation which their majeſties muſt have ſuffered, from thoſe deſpicable diſputes and quarrels, may be eaſily conceived.

The emigration of the principal civil officers of the houſehold made it be expected, that the inſtallation of the guards would be followed by a new civil arrangement in the court. It was ſuppoſed that the king, from a deſire of conciliating the minds of the people, would form this eſtabliſhment in the moſt popular manner. All thoſe perſons,

perſons, of the one ſex as well as the other, who flattered themſelves with ſome ſituation in the houſehold, were continually teazing the miniſters to prevail on the king and queen to conclude that buſineſs, each of them hinting, that their being appointed would give general ſatisfaction, and greatly promote the king's popularity.

Convinced, as I was, that the only permanent popularity which the king could acquire muſt ariſe from a vigorous conduct, I declined all interference in this affair: but the other miniſters inſiſted ſo much upon it in the council, that the king was at laſt obliged to explain himſelf. He expreſſed neither a great deſire to complete his houſehold, nor an unwillingneſs, but only obſerved, that the thing appeared to him extremely delicate as well as difficult.

"I feel," ſaid he, "that the queen cannot, without inconveniency, retain the wives of the emigrants about her, and I have already ſpoken to her upon the ſubject: but it cannot be expected that ſhe is to form her ſociety of Madame Petion, Madame

Madame Condorcet, and women of that ſtamp. With reſpect to myſelf, thoſe whoſe ſervices were moſt agreeable to me, have deſerted me; and amongſt thoſe who remain, there are ſome who are the torment of my life: for inſtance, there is Chauvelin, who is a ſpy in my family, always commenting upon what is ſaid, and giving a falſe account of all that paſſes."

"Why, then, does not your majeſty diſmiſs him?" ſaid I.

"From regard to his father's memory," anſwered his majeſty.

After the council was over, I propoſed, that, ſince M. de Chauvelin acted in a manner ſo reprehenſible, his majeſty might diſmiſs him directly from his ſervice; explaining the motives in the letter by which he ſignified to him his diſmiſſion; and that if M. de Chauvelin ſhould give himſelf any airs on the occaſion, the king's letter might be publiſhed in the newſpapers. But this meaſure was too ſevere for the king; and he ſoon after got rid of M. de Chauvelin, by ſending him as miniſter plenipotentiary

to

to England, under the direction of the Abbé Perigord, biſhop of Autun, who was, in reality, the confidential miniſter, although, from particular circumſtances, he could not, with propriety, appear at the Britiſh court.

With regard to the houſehold eſtabliſhment, the king dexterouſly avoided giving a definitive anſwer, by ordering each of the miniſters to draw up a ſeparate plan for the regulation of his houſe, and that of the queen; and alſo a liſt of the perſons whom they judged proper to fill the different places.

The miniſters agreed to poſtpone this diſcuſſion, until almanacks could be procured of the principal courts of Europe, from which they might form a plan for the new eſtabliſhment; and by this means the king gained time, which was his aim.

The fund of the civil liſt was divided into twelve equal payments, and placed in the cheſt of M. Tourteau de Septeuil, who was at once the king's *valet de chambre* and treaſurer of the civil liſt. Theſe payments

were

were made in aſſignats, except the ſum of ſeventy-five thouſand livres, which the king deſired he might receive in ſpecie; but at the end of November 1791, the commiſſioners of the national treaſury informed M. Septeuil, that upon account of the extreme ſcarcity of money, they could no longer give the above ſum to his majeſty in ſpecie; and that it muſt in future be paid in aſſignats.

The king mentioned this in council, and appeared much affected at the thoughts that it would not be any longer in his power to pay, in ſpecie, ſeveral expences foreign to his perſonal ſervice, which he was in uſe to draw from his private purſe.

"I can no longer," ſaid he, "have ten louis at my diſpoſal; for if it be diſcovered that I endeavour to procure gold, I ſhall be ſuſpected of a project to eſcape. Perhaps I ſhall even be accuſed of monopolizing the ſpecie of the kingdom, with a view to depreciate aſſignats."

I immediately took up my pen, and wrote the following note, which I put into the

the king's hands, a moment before the council broke up:

"I have a certain means of procuring for the king, unknown to any one, the ſum his majeſty ſtands in need of; and I beg to receive his orders on the ſubject."

After the council was over, the king approached me, and ſaid, with a ſmile, "It is well. Come and ſpeak to me to-morrow morning."

The next day, on entering the king's apartment, I read, in his countenance, that my propoſal pleaſed him. His only uneaſineſs was, his fear of my being expoſed to danger. When I had made him eaſy on this point, he expreſſed his ſatisfaction for my zeal, and approved of the plan I propoſed for procuring the money.

"It is not for myſelf I want it," ſaid he, "for my expences are paid in aſſignats; but it is for old ſervants, whom I have always paid in money; alſo for charitable uſes, and to enable me occaſionally to furniſh the queen and my ſiſter with a few louis, in exchange for their aſſignats."

Before the end of December, I was happy in having it in my power to inform the king that I had four thouſand louis d'or at his ſervice. His majeſty approved of my bringing them myſelf, to avoid having a third perſon in the confidence; and accordingly I went to the palace ſeveral mornings, with five hundred louis in my pocket.

On one of thoſe occaſions, I arrived juſt as the king returned from maſs; and only thinking of getting rid of my load, I went up to his majeſty, and begged his permiſſion to follow him; the king looked at me, and after a moment's heſitation, anſwered, "*Oui, oui, venez.*"

This anſwer was heard by ſeveral perſons who were in the council chamber, who ſmiled, and bowed their head to me in a complimentary manner, for which I could not gueſs a reaſon. The marechal de Noailles, who was preſent, ſaid to me, taking me by the hand, "I congratulate you."

"Upon what, M. le Marechal?" replied I.

"Upon

"Upon the king's granting you the *entrée* into his chamber."

"Why I enter every day," returned I.

"What, when the king is dreſſing?"

"No," ſaid I; "but—"

"Well," interrupted he, "in that caſe I repeat my congratulations; for at this hour no one is admitted to the king, except the officers *de ſa garde robe*, and a few particular friends, to whom he grants the favour; which, once obtained, is always continued."

"If that be the caſe," ſaid I, "as I have to ſpeak to the king, I will wait till he is dreſſed."

I accordingly did ſo, in ſpite of the marechal's advice to the contrary, that the king might not ſuppoſe that I took advantage of the ſervice I rendered him, to gain any favour whatever; but when he was dreſſed, and every body had left the apartment, I deſired the chief *valet de chambre* to inform his majeſty that I waited his orders. As ſoon as I entered, the king inquired what had become of me, and told me that he imagined I was following him. I anſwered,

that when I requeſted an audience, I had not recollected that it was the hour of his *toilette*; but ſeeing his majeſty was going to dreſs, I choſe to wait until it was over.

"What, are you afraid of the powder?" ſaid he, ſmiling.

Without making any anſwer, I laid the louis on the table, and ſoon after withdrew.

Meanwhile, in ſpite of my exertions, inſubordination and diſorder made a rapid progreſs in the ſea-ports, particularly at Breſt, where the intendant of marine, M. Beaupreau, being one of the principal members of the Jacobin club, regularly communicated to that ſociety all the letters he received from the miniſter.

The nomination of M. de la Jaille to the command of one of the veſſels, deſtined to carry ſuccour to St. Domingo, occaſioned great diſturbances at Breſt. That diſtinguiſhed officer was aſſaulted by a mob of more than three thouſand perſons. He received ſeveral wounds, and owed his life to the courage of an honeſt and vigorous *chaircutier*, who interpoſed

poſed in his behalf; and by their mutual efforts they defended themſelves till the guard came and relieved them both.

The municipality of Breſt found no other means of ſaving M. de la Jaille than that of throwing him into priſon, and giving hopes to the atrocious villains, who thirſted for his blood, that this ariſtocrate would be brought to juſtice; for ariſtocracy was the only crime that was laid to his charge.

Upon the account which I gave in council of this unhappy affair, it was decreed, that immediate orders ſhould be given to the municipality for the enlargement of M. de la Jaille, and the proſecution of the authors of the riot, which had taken place in open day, and of which all the inhabitants of Breſt were witneſſes. The king alſo deſired to ſee the brave *chaircutier* who had ſaved M. de la Jaille's life, and ordered the miniſter of the home department to write to him to come to Paris. A few days after this brave and worthy fellow arrived, and deſired no other reward than the honour of being preſented to the king. His majeſty

gave him a very fine ſabre, and a gold medal, upon which was engraved, "*Given by the king to l'Auverjeat*, chaircutier *at Breſt, as a reward for the generous intrepidity with which he expoſed his life to ſave that of a citizen.*"

The orders given by the miniſter of juſtice remained unexecuted. M. de la Jaille was ſtill in priſon, under pretence that his being ſet at liberty would endanger his life; and the members of the tribunal of juſtice, apprehending that the proſecution of the rioters would occaſion an attack againſt themſelves, had not yet ventured to commence the proceſs. I in vain repreſented in council, and in the aſſembly, that the impunity with which ſuch crimes were committed was the motive upon which the officers of marine founded their refuſal of taking any command. When I gave an account of this fact in council, M. de Narbonne took me up in the following terms: "Do all the officers refuſe? Am I to underſtand, that if we had any uneaſineſs with reſpect to the diſpoſition of England, and that

that I demanded a frigate of you, to cruiſe along our coaſt, you could not furniſh it?"

"It is not frigates that we are in want of," anſwered I; "but at this moment I ſhould be greatly at a loſs to find an officer to command it."

I only mention this circumſtance, becauſe of the interpretation which M. de Narbonne afterwards put upon my anſwer, as will hereafter appear.

It was upon this ſame occaſion that I importuned the *Garde des Sceaux* to take vigorous meaſures againſt the judges of Breſt; namely, to puniſh them, or at leaſt diſmiſs them, if they delayed any longer to render juſtice to M. de la Jaille. He anſwered, that in the preſent circumſtances we muſt uſe great circumſpection and addreſs; becauſe, if we pretended to adhere ſtrictly to the letter of the conſtitution, we ſhould ſoon find ourſelves gravelled.

"I know nothing of that," ſaid I, "nor will I enter into any diſcuſſion on that point; but this I do know perfectly, that we have no right to attempt to modify or

new conſtrue the conſtitution; our duty is to endeavour to execute it preciſely as it is, becauſe without this we can never make it be fully known and underſtood by the nation; and therefore if there really is any gravel in the conſtitution, the beſt thing we can do is to make it manifeſt to the whole nation, that thoſe who have a right may apply the proper remedies, or make the neceſſary alterations. After each miniſter has for ſome time followed this plan in his own department, we may ſome day go all together to the national aſſembly, and lay open our conduct before them, informing them of the efforts we have made to execute the conſtitution literally; and that notwithſtanding our having uſed all the legal means in our power, we ſtill had found ſome inſurmountable obſtacle, from which it would be apparent that the execution of the conſtitution was impoſſible in ſome caſes, and in others, that it would be pernicious. Depend upon it," continued I, "the aſſembly, or at leaſt the nation at large, would thank us for having made

made this diſcovery, and conſider us as worthy, upright miniſters, and true patriots."

"Yes," rejoined the *Garde des Sceaux*, "but by that means we ſhall raiſe againſt us all the conſtitutionaliſts, the Jacobins, the clubs, and we ſhall have another revolution, worſe perhaps than the preſent one."

"Another revolution we may have," ſaid I; "but one worſe than the preſent is impoſſible. Of this I am ſo convinced, that I am determined not to deviate one ſtep from the courſe that I have mentioned to you."

In the firſt diſcourſe which I pronounced to the aſſembly in the end of October 1791, I announced, that I would not begin the execution of the general plan, until all the decrees were paſſed reſpecting the particular laws by which my adminiſtration was to be regulated. The motive I alleged for this determination was the importance of preventing the confuſion and inconveniencies attending an incomplete organization, from creating any prejudice againſt

againſt the new regulations. It could not be doubted but that this was the opinion of the aſſembly, after the applauſe which was given to this part of my diſcourſe.

I waited with great tranquillity for the above-mentioned decrees, which the committee of marine, ſolely occupied in finding occaſions to blame me, were never thinking of. They ſeemed to have entirely forgot the neceſſity of ſuch decrees.

I always kept up the ſame reſerve with the committee, never going there, and avoiding all correſpondence with it; and even when I received a letter from thence, which required any neceſſary information, inſtead of anſwering the preſident of the committee, I addreſſed my explanation to the preſident of the aſſembly, as if I gave it of my own accord, and taking no notice of its being demanded by the committee. Thoſe gentlemen were enraged at this conduct, at the ſame time they could not complain, as that would have been reproaching me for my too great fidelity to the conſtitution. They one day

ſent

ſent their preſident to me, upon an affair which greatly intereſted them. He made himſelf be announced by the title of preſident of the committee of marine.

"I know no ſuch perſon," ſaid I, aloud to the footman who announced him. "Do you know if the gentleman is a member of the aſſembly?"

"Yes, ſir."

"Well, if that be the caſe, announce him by his name."

This order was punctually obeyed, and rather diſconcerted the preſident, who was near enough to the door to hear what I ſaid.

"You know, ſir," ſaid I to him, "that the conſtitution does not authorize us to have any communication with the committees, conſequently you cannot be offended with my preciſion upon this occaſion. You are a member of the aſſembly; in that quality my houſe is open to you, and I ſhall be always ready to attend to whatever you may have to communicate."

"I imagined," ſaid he, "that as your colleagues—"

"My

"My colleagues," interrupted I, "have undoubtedly good reaſons for acting as they do, but for my own part, I have none to deviate from the conſtitution: but I ſhall be ready to attend to you with the ſame attention and intereſt as if you were preſident of all the committees of the aſſembly."

"I came to ſpeak to you, ſir," ſaid he, "reſpecting the various offers which have been made for proviſions for the navy. I preſume you intend to finiſh that buſineſs."

"Not yet. It is much leſs preſſing than many others, becauſe there is already a board of commiſſioners, to whom that buſineſs is entruſted, who execute their duty very well."

"I mentioned this," reſumed he, "only becauſe we are teazed at preſent with offers from various companies, deſirous of that undertaking, and whoſe propoſals ſeem advantageous."

"As that regards *me* only," ſaid I, "you may eaſily get rid of their importunity, by ſending them to me. With reſpect to their propoſals, when we are ready for determining,

mining, we ſhall conſider which is the moſt advantageous: but this I am certain of already, that ſome are of a diſgraceful nature, ſome hints having been given very much reſembling bribes: as allowing a conſiderable ſhare in the profits, without any advance of money, to ſome of my friends or relations. I mention this, in the full conviction that you highly diſapprove of every thing of this kind; and that if the ſame inſulting propoſals had been made to any member of the aſſembly, they would have been rejected with the ſame indignation that I have done."

He appeared to me to deſerve this compliment, for he really had the countenance of an honeſt man: but I was far from having the ſame opinion of all his colleagues, and particularly of the members of the marine committee. I ought, however, to acknowledge, that there were men of probity amongſt them, who, without having any perſonal acquaintance with me, always took my part, and had the candour to convey to

me

me all the intelligence which they believed could be of any uſe.

Some time after, I was informed, in the middle of the night, that the account of my converſation with the preſident had greatly exaſperated the majority of the committee againſt me. They conſidered my poſtponing the deciſion on the various propoſals above-mentioned as a proof of unwillingneſs to execute the conſtitution, and of an inclination to overturn the preſent ſyſtem of the marine department; in conſequence of which the committee had haſtily agreed on the principal articles of a report, to be laid next day before the aſſembly, as the foundation of a decree of accuſation againſt me.

I too well knew the diſpoſitions of the aſſembly, with regard to me, not to apprehend that this report would be agreed upon without my being heard; and the decree of accuſation once paſſed, it would have been difficult to have obtained the revocation. It was therefore more prudent to

prevent the report from being made; and I gained this point by eaſy means. I immediately wrote a letter to the preſident of the aſſembly, in which I complained bitterly that none of the decrees were paſſed which I ſtood in need of, to terminate the formation of the marine department, although I had given a ſketch of thoſe decrees in my diſcourſe pronounced laſt October, and that the aſſembly had acknowledged the neceſſity of paſſing them, before the new regulations of the marine department could be made; and I expreſſed myſelf particularly hurt, as thoſe who were unacquainted with this circumſtance would impute the delay given to the meaſures entirely to my want of diligence.

This letter, which was read in the aſſembly at the moment when the committee of marine were going to make the report, in order to found the decree of accuſation againſt me, entirely diſconcerted the orator and his adherents. Their declamations, and the ſteps they had taken to inſure the majority

majority of votes were rendered thoroughly ridiculous.

They revenged themſelves a few days after, by having it decreed, that whereas the reading of letters from the miniſters in the aſſembly occaſioned much loſs of time, henceforth they ſhould be laid before the committee, which would only give an account of ſuch as were of ſufficient conſequence to merit the attention of the aſſembly.

This decree, by which they flattered themſelves they ſhould have the power of weakening or ſuppreſſing, at pleaſure, our means of defence, gave me no uneaſineſs, becauſe the miniſters always retained the right of ſpeaking in the aſſembly, by which I expected to be able to repel the attacks made againſt me.

This continual warfare would only have been an amuſement to the miniſters, if they had not been more ſcrupulous than their enemies in the means of defence they employed: but the practice peculiar to the Jacobins, of purſuing, without heſitation, the

the moſt criminal paths, when neceſſary to gain their end, gave them an advantage which men of principle had no means of reſiſting.

" You have nothing to fear from the ariſtocrates, " ſaid Mirabeau, one day, to his adherents;" they neither pillage, burn, nor aſſaſſinate. What, then, can they do againſt you? Let them go on with their declamations; their fate is decided."

Mirabeau was certainly in the right. He might alſo have added, that men of probity would not permit their worſt enemies to be aſſaſſinated, even when it could not be imputed to them, to have promoted or countenanced the crime in any way.

This was what the Intendant of Breſt experienced on a remarkable occaſion, which I cannot paſs over in ſilence. Towards the end of the year 1791, at the time of the armament deſtined to carry ſuccour to St. Domingo, Redon de Beaupreau, Intendant of Breſt, ſent me, according to cuſtom, a liſt of perſons, whom he recommended as *commis aux revues* in the expe-

dition. I was much ſurpriſed to find in this liſt the name of Bellanger, one of the chiefs of the Jacobin club, who had figured in all the inſurrections at Breſt, and promoted the aſſaſſinations. Beaupreau himſelf, in the notes which he addreſſed, ſix months before, to my predeceſſor, had always repreſented this Bellanger as a moſt atrocious character, whom he intended to turn out of his office, as ſoon as it could be done without danger. I did not heſitate to efface Bellanger's name from the liſt of *commis aux revues*; and when I announced this to Beaupreau, I took care to let him know that it was the note he ſent to my predeceſſor, of which I gave him the extract, which had determined me.

I had no doubt but that my letter would throw Beaupreau into great embarraſſment, but I had no idea that it would expoſe him to be aſſaſſinated; and I was ſurpriſed, by a letter I received from M. de Marigni, who commanded the marine at Breſt, and who had the goodneſs to tranſmit to me the humble and preſſing ſupplications, which

Beaupreau did not dare to ſend me himſelf, upon Bellanger's name being effaced from the liſt.

M. de Marigni informed me, that the life of Beaupreau was in my hands, as Bellanger would cauſe him to be aſſaſſinated, as ſoon as he was informed of my motive for refuſing to appoint him. And although M. de Marigni had been the object of the Intendant's perſecution from the commencement of the revolution, he had the generoſity to intercede for his enemy, and ſolicit me to replace the name of Bellanger in the liſt.

Beaupreau alſo employed in this mediation M. Pouget, an ancient intendant of marine, of great merit, in whom he knew I had much confidence. The letter which Beaupreau wrote to him upon this occaſion was full of proteſtations of repentance for what he termed paſt errors, and aſſurances that he would conduct himſelf better in future. Far from retracting his word reſpecting Bellanger, he added, "that he was a monſter who deſerved to be hanged:

but that he had included him in the liſt of *commis*, to get rid of him from Breſt, where his patriotic frenzy occaſioned the greateſt diſorder, and he was in hopes, that aboard whatever veſſel he was employed, his conduct would be ſuch that he would be toſſed into the ſea."

I ſhould certainly have been excuſable in adhering to my firſt determination of refuſing to put him again on the liſt, however fatal the conſequences might have proved to Beaupreau; and I might alſo have deprived this intendant of his place, for his prevarication in recommending a perſon to a confidential employment, whom he had denounced to the miniſter, a few months before, as a wretch capable of every crime. But as it was impoſſible, at that period, to appoint a man of probity to his ſituation at Breſt, without expoſing him to the greateſt danger, I preferred ſaving the life of Beaupreau, although, in ſo doing, I riſked my reſponſibility, by approving the appointment of a villain like Bellanger.

CHAP. XIII.

Bad ſucceſs of the laſt naval promotion.—Reſignation of almoſt all the officers.—The Duke of Orleans accepts the rank of admiral.—Sentiments he expreſſed to me upon the occaſion.—He waits upon the king.—He returns to the palace the Sunday following, and is inſulted.—The Count d'Eſtaing accepts of the rank of admiral, with reſtrictions.—His ridiculous demands and conduct.—The deputy Rouyer protects him.—Letter of Rouyer to the king.—M. de Peynier, after having accepted the new rank with which he was inveſted, refuſes the command of the marine at Breſt, and gives in his reſignation.

THE promotion made by M. Thevenard did not give ſatisfaction in the navy. I never expected it would. How could it be imagined that brave officers, accuſtomed to the reſpect of the ſailors, and to have their orders obeyed with ſubmiſſion, ſhould

ever conſent to become the inſtruments of their own degradation? The profeſſion which had been honoured by their talents and their courage had now nothing to offer but dangers without glory, and ſervice without utility, ſince diſobedience and revolt were not only tolerated, but encouraged and regarded as marks of patriotiſm. Accordingly almoſt all the officers ſent me their reſignation, upon the receipt of my letter announcing their promotion. The duke of Orleans and the count d'Eſtaing were amongſt the few exceptions.

The duke of Orleans was not ſatisfied with writing to me that he had accepted the rank of admiral; he likewiſe paid me a viſit; and, amongſt other matters, he aſſured me, that he ſet the higher value upon the favour which the king had conferred on him, becauſe it gave him the means of convincing his majeſty how much his ſentiments had been calumniated. This declaration was made with an air of great openneſs and ſincerity, and accompanied with the warmeſt proteſtations of loyalty.

"I am

"I am very unfortunate," ſaid he, "without deſerving to be ſo. A thouſand atrocities have been laid to my charge, of which I am completely innocent. I have been ſuppoſed guilty by many, merely becauſe I have diſdained to enter into any juſtification of myſelf from crimes, of which I have a real horror. You are the firſt miniſter to whom I ever ſaid as much, becauſe you are the only one whoſe character ever inſpired me with confidence. You will ſoon have an opportunity of judging whether my conduct gives the lie to my words."

He pronounced theſe laſt words with a voice and manner which convinced me he meant them as an anſwer to the air of incredulity with which I liſtened to him. I anſwered him, that I was ſo much afraid of weakening the force of his expreſſions, in reporting them to the king, as he deſired I ſhould, that I begged of him to deliver them himſelf to his majeſty. He replied, that it was preciſely what he wiſhed; and that if he could flatter himſelf that the king

would receive him, he would go to the court next day.

I gave his majeſty an account, the ſame evening at the council, of the viſit I had received from the duke of Orleans, and all that had paſſed; adding, that I could not help being convinced of the ſincerity of his profeſſions. The king reſolved to receive him, and the following day had a converſation with him of more than half an hour, with which his majeſty appeared to be well ſatisfied.

"I am of your opinion," ſaid he to me, "that he returns to us with ſincerity, and that he will do all that depends on him to repair the miſchiefs which have been committed in his name, and in which, very poſſibly, he has not had ſo great a ſhare as we have ſuſpected."

The following Sunday the duke of Orleans came to the king's levee, where he met with the moſt mortifying reception from the courtiers, who were ignorant of what had paſſed, and from the royaliſts, who

who uſually came on that day to pay their court to the royal family. They preſſed round him, treading deſignedly upon his toes, and puſhing him towards the door. When he went into the queen's apartment, where the cloth was already laid, as ſoon as he appeared, they cried out on every ſide, "let nobody approach the diſhes;" inſinuating that he might throw poiſon into them.

The inſulting murmurs which his preſence excited, forced him to retire without having ſeen any of the royal family. He was purſued to the top of the ſtairs; and as he was going down, ſome ſpit over the ſtaircaſe upon him. He haſtened out, filled with rage and indignation, and convinced that the king and queen were the authors of theſe outrages, of which they were not only ignorant, but extremely concerned when they were informed of them. From that moment the duke of Orleans conceived implacable hatred, and vowed vengeance againſt the king and queen. He kept this oath but too well. I

happened

happened to be at court that day, and was an eye-witneſs to the ſcene I have juſt related.

Upon the count d'Eſtaing's appointment to the rank of admiral, he wrote me a letter of eight pages, expreſſed in ſuch ambiguous terms, that I ſhould not have been able to comprehend it, if M. de Montmorin, whom he ſolicited to recommend his requeſt to me, had not explained it more clearly. I perceived that he was very well pleaſed to be admiral, but that he objected to being ſo upon the ſame footing with others; and he wiſhed that a new place, under the title of *admiral extraordinary*, ſhould be created for him; aſſerting, that ſomething of the ſame kind had been done when he obtained the rank of chief of a ſquadron. He deſired alſo to have it expreſsly aſcertained, that his rank of admiral was not to be an obſtruction to his attaining that of *Marechal de France*. I anſwered him, that the duke of Orleans being as yet the only admiral, and even the only officer of the marine, who had accepted of the rank with which he was inveſted, I could

could not well propoſe to the aſſembly to create a place of admiral extraordinary, until all the ordinary admirals had accepted their commiſſions. This reaſon did not ſatisfy him. He had, he ſaid, very good friends in the aſſembly, and particularly in the committee of marine, and he was certain, that if I would lay his requeſt before them, it would be granted. I adviſed him to draw it up in the form of a memorial. I conſented even to receive it, and to ſend it to the aſſembly, but without adding any obſervation of my own. I was informed, a few days after, that the principal perſon on whoſe influence he relied, in the committee of marine, was preciſely that Rouyer, who was the moſt violent of all my antagoniſts, and, fortunately for me, the moſt fooliſh. The count d'Eſtaing went almoſt every day to the houſe of this man, ſometimes waiting two whole hours in his antichamber; and he never addreſſed him by any other name than "my dear captain," either when he ſpoke or wrote to him, although he never had ſerved in that rank. This he probably did with

with the view of appearing to favour Rouyer's pretenſions to the croſs of St. Lewis*.

I was informed of theſe circumſtances by his clerk, who told me, at the ſame time, that the man's ambition was no longer limited to the croſs of St. Lewis, but that he now aſpired to the rank of firſt miniſter, and intended to make the propoſal to the king by a letter, which he was to deliver himſelf, accompanied by two chevaliers of St. Lewis; and that he had been teaſing this ſame clerk, for a week paſt, to compoſe a letter for him; and ſtill inſiſted on it, in ſpite of the man's expoſtulation againſt ſuch a deſign.

I was, on the contrary, of opinion, that it would be very advantageous to the king to be in poſſeſſion of the means of expoſing

* Rouyer took care to make himſelf named, by the marine committee, "Reporter of M. d'Eſtaing's demand," and pronounced a very emphatic diſcourſe in his favour, on the 6th of March 1792, to the aſſembly; in conſequence of which it was decreed that M. d'Eſtaing might act as admiral, without preventing him from obtaining his rank in the army, but on condition that he ſhould receive only the emoluments of the ſituation which he actually did occupy.

a knave

a knave of this kind; therefore I adviſed the clerk not to defer writing the letter any longer, and to make it extravagant and ridiculous, but at the ſame time in ſuch a ſtile as would impoſe upon Rouyer, and prevent him from ſeeing the end intended. Nothing was eaſier. The clerk afterwards ſhewed me a rough ſketch of the letter, with which I was, upon the whole, very well pleaſed. The few alterations I ſuggeſted were ſoon made, and I demanded, as a proof of zeal, which might be uſeful to the clerk, that he would give me a copy of the letter, as ſoon as Rouyer had determined to write it. The clerk brought me the copy next day, telling me, at the ſame time, that Rouyer was ſo enchanted with the letter, that he already fancied himſelf firſt miniſter; and that he was now in ſearch of two chevaliers of St. Lewis to accompany him, when he went to preſent the letter to the king, "and to warrant, by their preſence, that he was capable of *performing all that he had promiſed to his majeſty.*" This ſentence, which was at the end of the original

ginal letter, was not inſerted in that which was delivered to the king on the 17th of March 1792, and afterwards found in the iron cabinet, becauſe Rouyer was forced to ſuppreſs it, after having ſought in vain, for the ſpace of two months, for two chevaliers of St. Lewis to accompany him.

Before the king received the letter ſent by Rouyer, therefore, he was perfectly acquainted with the contents, by means of the copy that I had ſhewn him, which had amuſed him very much.

This performance is ſo very curious, that I cannot avoid inſerting it. Here it is, exactly as it was printed in the king's proceſs, in the third collection, page 104.

Letter from Rouyer to the King.

" Sire,

" A citizen, inveſted by the people with the painful and glorious power of giving them laws, and of watching over their happineſs, requeſts your attention upon the preſent ſtate of the kingdom, and deſires to propoſe

propoſe to you the means of inſuring its glory and felicity. Deeply impreſſed with the evils which rend my country, I ought alſo to count up its innumerable reſources. I have probed its wounds, and calculated its force. I have compared all, examined all, and I have foreſeen all. I can now announce to your majeſty, that upon you alone depends the execution of the laws, and conſequently the ſecurity of the empire. You can, in a word, heal its wounds, diſſipate its alarms, and annihilate its perils: you can reſtore to France that peace which has fled, and that dignity which ought to belong to her. You can reſtore to the throne that national love which is its only ſecurity, and that luſtre which is its due.

" Sire, in order to execute this noble deſign, I only require the direction of the means which the law entruſts with you, and to be empowered to employ the force which the conſtitution has placed in your hands; and I offer my head in pledge of the ſincerity of my promiſes, the wiſdom of my plans, and the certainty of ſucceſs.

Do

Do not imagine, ſire, that zeal for public good has diſturbed my imagination, or that the illuſions of ſelf-love make me overrate my own powers: I am ſure of performing *ſucceſsfully* what I undertake *boldly*. Permit me to enjoy the conſoling hope of reſtoring your happineſs (for your's depends upon that of the ſtate). I know that numerous obſtacles oppoſe the exertion of public power, and combat, without ceaſing, the benefits of the law. I ſee every where ſedition in action, and authority hiding its head: anarchy elevating itſelf, and a government which dares not ſuppreſs it. Your miniſters, ſire, preſent this fatal picture too often to your view: they tell you of the troubles, without explaining the cauſes of them; and if they ever conceived the idea of terminating them, they have always been deterred by weak obſtacles or exaggerated dangers. But I know theſe dangers, and I ſet them at defiance. Weakneſs can only calculate them, but genius overcomes them; leaving it to hiſtory to deſcribe the dangers after they are annihilated.

"This,

"This, ſire, is the glorious labour to which I invite you, offering you, at the ſame time, the tribute of my courage, of my moral and phyſical powers, and of my profound reſpect. Receive the homage of a citizen, who perhaps may have been falſely repreſented to you as a man of an ardent character, an enemy to order and royalty, but whoſe actions ſhall every where proclaim, that nature and honour have engraven on his ſoul the love of his country and of his king.

" Sire, I ſtill repeat to your majeſty, that I engage to re-eſtabliſh, in two months, the royal authority, peace within the kingdom, conſideration without, and public felicity, if you condeſcend to adopt the council which my zeal ſhall dictate to you. I deſire not pomp, nor honours, nor any reward but the glory of ſaving my country. You can greatly contribute to it; and I would willingly think that you only require to be informed of the means. I ſhall diſcover them to your majeſty: I ſhall reveal what your miniſters conceal from you, or inform you

of what they are ignorant. You yourſelf ſhall behold the ſtate of your empire; you ſhall appreciate the men whom the law permits you to command; you ſhall hear thoſe whom the people diſtinguiſh by their confidence; and if you obſerve the conduct which I ſhall point out, you will find the ſuſpicions and alarms, which have been ſowed around you, diſſipated by the love and reſpect of all Frenchmen. You will find the power which the conſtitution gives you increaſed by opinion, ſupported by eſteem, firmly eſtabliſhed by the confidence of all the citizens; and the queen, partaking with your majeſty in the fruits of general happineſs, will then feel, that the only pure felicity is that which ariſes from benevolence and virtue. But this plan cannot be executed, unleſs your majeſty is animated with the ſincere deſire of preſerving together, in all its parts, the conſtitution of the ſtate. And if, in ſpite of the outcry of fanatical prieſts, the threats of emigrants, and the conduct of foreign princes, you are not abſolutely convinced of the neceſſity of braving this inſignificant

league

league which is forming againſt us, I ſhall be much ſurpriſed; becauſe, for my own part, ſire, I am ſo well convinced of our own force and reſources, that when I caſt my eyes upon the enemies that menace us, they excite no other ſentiment than that of pity.

"Raiſed to the elevation of liberty and equality, thoſe coloſſal divinities who trample under foot all intrigues and all paſſions, I extend my view over the courts of Europe, and I am certain of having it in my power to force them to a peace.

"Yes, ſire, you may avoid a foreign war, or at leaſt reſtore internal peace, by the ſucceſs of our arms: you may render your authority more revered, more auguſt, more extenſive: you may become the tutelary god of the French nation. Through you, religion will triumph over the indecent diſſenſions which exiſt between the refractory and the conſtitutional prieſts: through you, reaſon and juſtice ſhall at laſt penetrate the ſouls of ariſtocrats, and you will bring them back to the boſom of their country,

diſarmed by remorſe. I ſhall ſilently enjoy the fruits of my advice, and of your ſtrength of mind. Happy in the general happineſs, I ſhall direct the public gratitude to you alone, and my heart ſhall be ſatisfied. The ambitious, who wiſh to elevate the edifice of their own fortune upon the wreck of monarchy; the hot-headed and extravagant, who imagine that liberty can only be eſtabliſhed upon broken ſceptres; all parties, all cabals ſhall bend before the throne raiſed upon the baſis of the conſtitution. Popular aſſemblies, whoſe riſe you were made to fear without foundation, ſhall then meet only to offer you their thanks and praiſe.

"This, ſire, is a faithful repreſentation of the change which you have it in your power to operate, by the means which I have unfolded. Diſtruſt ought not to find a place in your heart, and make you reject a faithful ſubject. Were I in the ſame perplexing circumſtances on the throne, where birth and the law has placed you, and if the ſame ſupport were offered me, no inward prejudice,

prejudice, nor malicious ſuggeſtion from without, no conſideration whatever, ſhould influence me to reject it.

"I attend your majeſty's deciſion with reſpectful confidence. My conduct and my letter demand an examination. Let it be as ſevere as reaſon, and as impartial as juſtice. But if it does not procure an anſwer, as I think that the fate of the ſtate depends upon it, permit me to ſummon, in this extraordinary cauſe, thoſe whoſe deareſt intereſt it includes, and ſubmit my letter to the judgment of the French nation.

(Signed) ROUYER, *Citoyen.*"

Paris, March 17, 1792.

A ſpirit of inſubordination and revolt had manifeſted itſelf in all the principal ſea-ports, and on board many veſſels of war, ever ſince the year 1789. Many officers had ſuffered outrage and perſonal inſult from the ſailors; ſo that the naval commanders in general were diſguſted with the ſervice; and I really imagined, that the duke of Orleans and the count d'Eſtaing

would have been the only officers of high rank willing to ſerve, while the navy was ſubjected to the new regulations. I was therefore greatly ſurpriſed when I received a letter from M. de Peynier, an officer of merit, who had formerly been *chef d'eſcadre*, informing me that he accepted, with all poſſible gratitude, of the new rank to which the king had promoted him. Some of this gentleman's friends, however, were perſuaded that his acceptation of employment in the preſent circumſtances was entirely owing to his having lived, for a long time, at a remote caſtle which belonged to him in the mountains of Bigorre, and to his being quite ignorant of the preſent ſtate of the navy. They wiſhed, therefore, that I ſhould keep his acceptance ſecret, until that was laid open to him. But as at this time I was accuſed of retarding the nomination to employments in my department, on purpoſe to ſpread the opinion that it would be impoſſible to fit out a fleet, or maintain a navy, according to the preſent eſtabliſhment, I did not chooſe to let this opportunity

nity ſlip of proving the falſehood of ſuch an opinion; for which reaſon I informed the council, that very day, of the letter I had received from M. de Peynier; and after having mentioned him to the king with the praiſe he merited, I propoſed that he ſhould be promoted to the immediate command at Breſt, inſtead of M. de la Grandiere, who had refuſed it. This propoſal was approved of by the whole council, but had no other effect than to juſtify me, in the eyes of the public, from the calumny above-mentioned; for M. de Peynier having, no doubt, been informed of the actual ſtate of the navy, in the interval between his writing to me and receiving the letter from the king, not only refuſed the command at Breſt, but alſo retracted his acceptation of the place appointed for him in the late promotion.

In other circumſtances, this conduct of M. de Peynier would have been very cenſurable: but how can we blame officers, who have often ſhewn their courage and zeal for the ſervice of their king and country, for refuſing to expoſe themſelves uſe-

leſsly to the danger of being inſulted, and even aſſaſſinated, by thoſe very ſailors, whoſe duty it was to reſpect and obey them? Convinced as I was, and am ſtill, that the chief force of the French navy conſiſts in the talents of the officers, I thought it my duty to pay all poſſible attention to their perſonal ſafety; and being likewiſe perſuaded that many of the officers would have given in their reſignation, if their attendance had been rigorouſly inſiſted on, at a time when there was not an abſolute neceſſity for it, and when the ſailors were in a ſtate of mutiny, I wiſhed to uſe every means to quiet the minds of the latter in the firſt place. I am ſtill perſuaded that, ſo far from being contrary to the oath I had ſworn to be faithful to the conſtitution, this conduct was the only one I could adopt, conformable to the intereſt of the ſtate, and, of courſe, to true patriotiſm.

CHAP. XIV.

Motives of the reſolution which I took of writing down the diſcourſes I pronounced in the aſſembly.—A diſcourſe which I pronounced upon the ſtate of the colony of St. Domingo.—Effect which it produced.

THE incorrect manner in which a ſentence, which I had pronounced at the famous ſitting of the 10th of October, had been reported, and the denunciation to which I had been expoſed, by publiſhing an explanation of that miſtake, made me reſolve to put into writing every diſcourſe that I ſhould afterwards make in the aſſembly, and to read it there from the manuſcript. By adhering ſtrictly to this reſolution, I have ſuffered leſs than otherwiſe I might, from the extreme malevolence which prevailed againſt me. It happened to me, one day, that I went to the aſſembly with a diſcourſe which had employed me part of

the night, and which I had but juſt finiſhed; ſo that I had not time to write it out fair, and read it from the firſt ſketch. It related to the diſaſters of St. Domingo. When I had pronounced it, the aſſembly decreed its being printed, and ordered me to leave it. I anſwered, that I could not, becauſe it was only a firſt ſketch, and ſo blotted, that nobody except myſelf could make it out; but that I would ſend a copy next day to the committee. One of the ſecretaries obſerved, that a copy might be made out directly by a clerk, and that it might be next day returned to me. I perſiſted in my refuſal, in ſpite of the murmurs of the aſſembly; giving, as an additional reaſon, that the king had not yet ſeen this diſcourſe, and that it was my duty to ſhew it to him as ſoon as poſſible: but that if they feared my making any alterations, they might mark the eraſures and references. After having ſaid this, and ſhewn my blotted minutes to the ſecretary, who had come from his place to take them from me, I put it into my pocket very deli-

deliberately, and then roſe up to withdraw. A general murmur and noiſe immediately took place in the aſſembly.

"The miniſter does not leave his diſcourſe," cried one.

"He has put it in his pocket," ſaid another.

"He is carrying it away," exclaimed a third.

"Yes, unqueſtionably, I am carrying it away," ſaid I, with firmneſs, turning to thoſe who were exclaiming, "but it is with no deſign to ſuppreſs it."

The cry ceaſed, and I went out.

This diſcourſe is connected with events of too important a nature to be omitted; I have therefore thought it abſolutely neceſſary to inſert it at large, as follows:

"Gentlemen, I formerly gave you an account of the meaſures taken by his majeſty for ſending ſuccours to the inhabitants of St. Domingo, as ſoon as their calamities and dangers were known: theſe ſuccours, inſufficient of themſelves, depended for ſucceſs upon their celerity only, and upon their

their being followed with far more important aids. But before this could be determined upon it was neceſſary to know exactly the true cauſes of the diſturbances which had brought about this great cataſtrophe. I have neglected nothing to diſcover them, becauſe this diſcovery can alone direct the meaſures calculated to prevent their recurrence. Some accuſe the proprietors of intending to betray the iſland to the Engliſh; 'and,' they add, 'that ſince the feudal ſyſtem is aboliſhed in France, the planters juſtly tremble for the deſtruction of the more barbarous tyranny which exiſts in the colonies: they foreſee that the claſſic land of liberty and equality will countenance ſlavery no where; therefore they wiſh to break aſunder all ties with it.' They quote in ſupport of this, the inconſiderate ſteps of ſome individuals, and ſome ſpeeches made in moments of rage, by men, whoſe paſſions being ardent from living under a burning ſun, they are the more eaſily exaſperated by the ſlighteſt contradiction, to which they have been entirely unaccuſtomed.

" Others,

" Others, on the contrary, imagine that the cauſes of the evils are incendiary publications, which are diſperſed throughout the colonies with the deſign of exciting the negroes to revolt, and the correſpondences which have for a long time been kept up between the mulattoes and a ſociety of pretended philanthropiſts, whoſe ſyſtem, they aſſert, is deſtructive of all colonial property. It may, indeed, be eaſily conceived, that ever ſince the firſt eſtabliſhment of our colonies in the Weſt Indies, a people of a humane and liberal way of thinking, and who always deſerved to be free, have regretted that the advantages reſulting from thoſe eſtabliſhments depended on the ſlavery of a large portion of their fellow-creatures. This feeling of a generous nation, which does them the more honour, that it ſprings ſpontaneouſly in their breaſt without reflection, and which is even eſtimable when it exceeds the bounds of prudence, muſt influence all Frenchmen; and a milder and more humane treatment of the negroes has been the conſequence.

" The

"The reſult of a ſentiment ſo natural and wiſe ſtopped here: but the ſpirit of philoſophy, which in France was more ambitious, determined to extend its conqueſts. It maintained, with all its powers of reaſoning, the theory of a ſentiment which it was perhaps enough to have felt. According to this ſyſtem, the colonies, theſe poſſeſſions, for which principles were diſregarded, and humanity ſhed tears, were not acquiſitions ſo important as avarice believed, but, on the contrary, were ruinous to the ſtate which had the misfortune to poſſeſs them. It was thought poſſible to replace them by poſſeſſions nearer at hand, in a climate of the ſame temperature, ſuch as Africa or the iſlands in the Mediterranean. The day muſt come, when it will be neceſſary to abandon theſe diſtant colonies, inhabited by planters, whoſe ingratitude and infidelity are already apparent. Theſe united conſiderations made a voluntary abandoning of theſe iſlands ſeem only an anticipation of an event which is inevitable.

"Our

" Our wiſer neighbours made ſimilar calculations relative to their colonies in North America, and demonſtrated, by the ſums expended in maintaining them, that they were burdenſome: but theſe wiſe reflections only occurred after their colonies were loſt. Beſides, the colonies in queſtion were continental, and had no reſemblance, except in their name, to the colonies of the American Archipelago. This difference did not ſtrike every mind; and when the intereſts of commerce appeared to favour the intereſts of humanity, the number of philanthropiſts was augmented by the addition of many, whoſe ſenſibility could only be excited by motives very different from thoſe of philanthropy.*

" The proprietors of Weſt India eſtates aſſert, that the ſanguinary ſcenes, of which they are the victims, originate in the errors and ſophiſtry of the pretended philanthropiſts. ' Follow,' ſay they, ' with attention the effects of that zeal which firſt propoſed the total abolition of ſlavery, and the complete freedom of the negroes, and afterwards,

wards, under the pretence of moderation, but in fact to haſten their ſchemes, only inſiſted upon the ſuppreſſion of the *ſlave trade;* and laſtly, by a more artful and ſkilful manœuvre, appeared to have confined the plan to changing the fate of the mulattoes, in order to ruin us with more certainty. Is it poſſible to conceive that a ſyſtem, founded upon humanity, could produce ſuch cruel effects? Does not the hiſtory of theſe countries furniſh us with an anecdote, which, by analogy and by compariſon, would honour the moſt delicate philanthopiſts? Was it not owing to the humane and pious Las Caſas, that America was filled with negroes? Was it not this virtuous Spaniard, who, melted by the miſery which his countrymen heaped upon the natives, in compelling them to hard labour, flew to Africa to ſeek men who, already devoted to ſlavery, might perform the taſks without any aggravation of their miſery, and with only a change of their maſters; and in a climate ſimilar to their own, might replace the feeble Americans, who, unfit

unfit for fatigue, ſunk under their labour and their chains? Although this pious miſſionary repented of the means which his miſtaken humanity ſuggeſted, it nevertheleſs is true, that in order to ſave a few Charibs who ſurvived ſo much wretchedneſs, he devoted millions of individuals to ſlavery, by the avarice which the immenſe market for ſlaves excited in Africa. Let us ſuppoſe that the modern philanthropiſts are actuated by as pure motives, yet it would be no leſs true, that by attempting to aboliſh the ſlavery of the blacks, they would reduce to miſery and deſpair five or ſix millions of whites, who are their fellow-citizens, their friends, and their brothers, and would overthrow one of the ſtrongeſt pillars of the power of the nation. It would be no leſs true, that they would not even effect the happineſs of thoſe whom they wiſh to ſerve; for, in order to accompliſh this, it would be neceſſary to have the concurrence of all thoſe ſtates who poſſeſs colonies; and that the abolition of ſlavery ſhould be the ſimultaneous decree of all the

powers who are intereſted: and without this univerſal agreement, both in will and deed, which is ſuppoſed ſo eaſy to obtain, the colonies would gain nothing but the choice of a protector, and the ſlaves the change of a maſter. The ſlaves may again ſucceed, as has been the caſe already in many places, in murdering us, our families, and all whom they conſider as their maſters, but the effect will be merely to procure them new maſters, much more cruel than us; for in this veſſel, in this kind of immenſe galley, which fate has placed in the Atlantic ocean, and to the benches of which miſtaken philanthropy leads the Africans, chaining them to the oars, the moſt ſucceſsful inſurrections of the crew would only tend to embitter their lot.'

"Such, gentlemen, are the attacks and defences which are employed by the planters and their antagoniſts. It is with a view to procure light to myſelf as a miniſter that I have examined what the real cauſes were which excited the commotions of St. Domingo, in order to employ the moſt effectual

fectual means of quieting them, and preventing their return.

" With regard to the accuſation againſt the proprietors, of intending to give themſelves up to the Engliſh or to the Americans, I know nothing, and I have ſeen nothing to make me ſuſpect ſo criminal a deſign. Beſides, how was this to be effected, by exciting the negroes to inſurrection, by impelling them to ravage the whole country? In offering themſelves to a new ſovereign, why would they chooſe to preſent only a heap of aſhes and ruins? With regard to the project of their claiming independence, there is no fact to prove that they had ſo extravagant a project. Their ſituation, their weakneſs, and their very nature announce, that to them dependence is a duty, and abſolutely neceſſary. They have even been accuſed of intending to bring about a counter-revolution. Surely thoſe who cannot credit the poſſibility of effecting a counter-revolution in France, muſt conſider the attempting it, at the diſtance of 1800 leagues from the mother

country, as decidedly impoſſible. It would excite ridicule, if the ſpectacle of ſo much miſery could permit the mind to receive any other impreſſion but that of grief.

"With regard to the accuſation pointed againſt the partizans of the freedom of the negroes, I cannot diſſemble having diſcovered that this is far better founded. But whatever is the cauſe of theſe diſaſters, by what means can they be repaired, and how can their return be prevented?

"What is moſt uſeful for us is certainly a knowledge of our true intereſts, and of our commercial intercourſe with the colonies, as ignorance on theſe points has been the chief ſource of our errors and our calamities. Our ſugar colonies ſhould be conſidered as ſo many manufactures, eſtabliſhed at the diſtance of eighteen hundred leagues from the mother country, and the mother country as a company of capitaliſts, who have defrayed the expences of theſe eſtabliſhments of agriculture and induſtry, by originally founding them, by maintaining them, and by protecting them. Every indi-

individual in the mother country is a party in this important ſpeculation. To ſhare its benefits, it is only requiſite to be born in France. All French citizens, yes, I ſay all of them, are intereſted in its proſperity, although under different titles. Some as cultivators or proprietors of land. This claſs labour the ground, partly to furniſh neceſſaries for theſe diſtant conſumers, and would be ruined without this important market for their crops. Others, being ſkilled in ſome ingenious art, which is exerciſed for the fabrication of goods for the colonies, which, without them, could never be ſold. Others, as merchants, navigators, and coaſting traders, &c. form a third claſs, who are employed in tranſporting the goods of the two firſt. Whatever ſituation an individual in this company occupies, whatever money or talent he brings to it, from the induſtrious labourer to the idle capitaliſt, from the ingenious manufacturer to the crafty jobber, from the bold ſpeculator to the timid annuitant, all are intereſted in theſe valuable poſſeſſions: even the calum-

niator himſelf ſpreads his libels there with profit.

"In whatever manner theſe colonies are governed or managed, they preſerve always their original character of an undertaking founded by the mother country, which alone is to receive the benefits or ſuffer the loſſes. Even at the time when government, unwiſely, if you pleaſe, granted the advantage of the excluſive trade of theſe colonies to certain companies, it only yielded to particular perſons the rights of all; but upon conditions which ought to have been beneficial to all. It was a mine which was farmed by the ſtate, inſtead of being wrought by it. Perhaps, by this plan, the profits of the great company were diminiſhed in favour of the ſmall ones. I only mention this, to ſhew that even in theſe monopolies the whole nation were intereſted in the produce of the colonies.

"The expence which theſe eſtabliſhments have coſt is certainly great; but how can we appreciate, by gold, or by numbers, the advantages which Europeans reap from their

their colonies? Is this not ſeen in the evident increaſe of population, the only certain ſign of public proſperity; a ſign which infallibly demonſtrates, at once, abundance of materials, and the neceſſity for more hands? (for men always increaſe where proviſions abound, and where there is a call for labour.) Is it not evident, that the neceſſity of ſelling the produce to the mother country, and purchaſing all that is wanted from it, is a ſource of incalculable wealth? If the colonies were conſidered as provinces belonging to the empire, or as allied ſtates, this double monopoly muſt appear both oppreſſive and unjuſt, as the commerce would be the moſt diſadvantageous, and the exchange the moſt unequal, that was ever propoſed between two parts of the ſame empire, or between two different empires. In fact, the colonies are compelled to purchaſe all that they conſume from us, which monopoly enables us to ſell to them what they ſtand in need of at a very high price; and as they are likewiſe compelled to ſell to us alone their produce, this enables us to

procure, at a very moderate rate, not only what is wanted for the conſumption of five-and-twenty millions of people, but likewiſe an immenſe overplus, which is ſold, for our benefit, to thoſe nations who have no colonies. Can all theſe advantages be calculated by a ſeries of figures, which, only expreſſing quantities, cannot be applied but to inanimate objects, which are ſuſceptible of addition and ſubſtraction? The truths diſcovered by this means are more certain, in proportion as the ſubject is independent of others, abſtracted, and conſidered only with relation to quantity. But when numbers are applied, to calculate, with exactneſs, national proſperity, when they are applied to government, and to whatever unites men in ſociety; they produce the moſt abſurd concluſions. This explains to us, beſides, how the moſt exact ſciences, when they venture out of the circle of ſubjects to which they are applicable, become, in the hands of the ambitious, the moſt treacherous guides, bewildering inſtead of illuminating the mind.

I beg,

"I beg, gentlemen, that you will reflect, that the tendency of thoſe errors is not ſimply to retard the wheel of national fortune, but to force it into retrograde movement. Such would be the natural effect of condemning into inactivity the millions of hands which are now employed in puſhing it forward. How calamitous would be the conſequence of cutting, at once, ſo many of the cords as are thus ſtretched in drawing riches to the nation!

"When the nature of the colonies is properly conſidered, the neceſſity becomes apparent of eſtabliſhing there a different kind of government from that which is adapted either to the whole of France, or to any one of its departments; and this example ought not to be regarded as an exception from the other. You ſee, now, what degree of wiſdom was diſplayed by the conſtituent aſſembly, in leaving to your deciſion the admiſſion or refuſal of the repreſentatives of the colonies, who ſhould be conſidered as the repreſentatives of a corporation or manufacture! Every thing is explained

explained by examining them in this light: but if they are looked upon only as one of the ordinary portions of the empire, the immenſe ſums which are gained by means of the monopoly muſt appear unjuſt and burdenſome. The right of exacting this wealth is founded upon our having incurred the original expence, and upon the intereſt which is due for it. Thus, in ſpite of the monopoly, our coloniſts become richer in proportion to the quantity of their produce ſold to us; and thus the gradual augmentation of their commerce increaſing, their need of our goods, their proſperity, and that of their mother country, go hand in hand.

"This reciprocity of exchange and of riches, ſo advantageous to France, makes it a duty incumbent upon us, at this moment, to repair the diſaſter which has befallen one of our richeſt eſtabliſhments. The total loſs ſuſtained by St. Domingo is eſtimated at the ſum of five or ſix hundred millions, the produce of which would have annually loaded one hundred and fifty ſhips of five hundred tons each. But this wound, how-

ever

ever deep, will be healed by the fecundity of the ſoil, and by the induſtrious activity of the inhabitants, if proper aſſiſtance be granted them, under the title of loans; if commerce, enlightened as to her intereſts, which are likewiſe the general intereſts of the ſtate, yields to the preſſure of circumſtances; if ſhe gives time to her ruined creditors; if ſhe wiſely ſuſpends her profits, in order to render them more certain and durable; and this is generouſly engaged to be done, in the numerous addreſſes which the merchants have preſented to the king; and I have no fear in pledging myſelf for the exact performance of this engagement.

" The aſſiſtance the beſt adapted to the circumſtances of the colonies, and which will moſt ſpeedily relieve their wants, is giving up to them all that is owing to us by the United States of America. This mode of relief will at once accommodate the Americans and our planters. The firſt can, upon reaſonable terms, furniſh to the diſtreſſed planters thoſe things

things which are moſt urgently wanted, ſuch as wood, proviſions, draught horſes, domeſtic animals, and frames of houſes, which, faſhioned in the foreſts of North America, may be put together in an inſtant, and will replace, at a ſmall expence, the ſtone buildings which have been burnt or deſtroyed.

" To what more uſeful purpoſe can thoſe ſums be deſtined, which a generous nation advanced to procure the independence of its allies, and which it feels already repaid with uſury, by the pleaſure of ſeeing their preſent independence? What ſight can be more delightful to true philoſophy, than to ſee the firſt wealth acquired by liberty, repairing the evils occaſioned by licentiouſneſs?

" It is of great moment, and his majeſty will readily conſent, as it is agreeable to the conſtitution, that it ſhould be left entirely to the colony to regulate the diſtribution and partition of this grant to thoſe who have ſuffered by fire and pillage; and likewiſe

wiſe to levy a ſuitable contribution upon thoſe whoſe poſſeſſions have been untouched.

" Meaſures for future ſecurity form the ſecond and moſt important claſs of ſuccours.

" The colonies, theſe ſources of proſperity, were hardly known in Europe, when every ſtate attempted to procure for themſelves their excluſive poſſeſſion. Every fortification placed there was planned by this jealous ſpirit: they were formed on the coaſts, to oppoſe invaſions from without. Why ſhould they fortify the interior of the colony againſt enemies whom they never expected? But melancholy experience convinces us that theſe are the moſt to be dreaded. This muſt neceſſarily occaſion ſome change in the ſyſtem of fortifications, which, beſides, were inſufficient, and require to be aided by more powerful means. Theſe fortifications, ranged from diſtance to diſtance along the coaſt, terrifying only in appearance, as they are eaſily avoided by the enemy, may be ſupported by a number of

little

little redoubts, placed more interiorly, to prevent, in caſe of an inſurrection, the communication by the mountains. Theſe poſts, without being dangerous to liberty, will ſuppreſs licentiouſneſs.

" The next conſideration is, the eſtabliſhment of colonial fuſileers, better organized than the old militia of St. Domingo, and compoſed entirely of proprietors; the whole of whom, according to the example of the national guards, ſhould be ready to march at the firſt ſignal, and a part only ſhould perform regular active ſervice. Secondly, Police laws are wanted to be executed with prudence and firmneſs, comprehending men of all claſſes and colours. Thirdly, A complete code of laws, to excite confidence in all towards the colonial proprietors, who are born the adminiſtrators of theſe eſtabliſhments; and at the ſame time to give the protection which is due to the men who cultivate the ground, preſerve them from being treated with capricious, exceſſive, or uſeleſs rigour, and which would prevent or puniſh inſurrections, as well as

thoſe

thoſe abuſes of authority which occaſion them. Fourthly, New regulations are required relative to the ſlave trade, to prevent its various abuſes, that thoſe ſorrowful and unhappy victims of our political intereſts may not be rendered alſo the victims of the cruelty of individuals; and obliged to groan, not only under thoſe evils which are become neceſſary to prevent greater, but likewiſe under the cruelties of ſordid œconomy or avarice.

"Such are the meaſures which the king charges me to propoſe to you, and which you, with wiſdom, will deliberate upon. Let us do homage to true philanthropy. It is only by its abuſes, and by falſe applications, that thoſe fatal effects, of which it is accuſed, can take place. It was owing to the moving ſolicitations and perſeverance of ſome friends of humanity in England that two bills, relative to the ſlave trade, were carried in parliament. They ameliorate the fate of the negroes, they limit the number which each ſlave ſhip is to contain, and command that which even a more enlight-

ened avarice might have prompted. A people, whoſe natural ſenſibility is ſuperior to ſuch laws, will undoubtedly ſtrive to ſurpaſs them, by inſtituting milder and more humane ones. If, in addition to the meaſures I have propoſed, you likewiſe ſend a body of troops to guard the different fortified poſts, perhaps you will find it uſeful never to leave the ſame corps longer than two or three years, on account of the climate, which a long reſidence renders fatal, and whoſe influence tends to relax military diſcipline. Perhaps, likewiſe, the danger of ſending a great part of the army acroſs the ſeas, every three years in ſucceſſion, will induce you to adopt other meaſures which circumſtances may ſuggeſt.

" With regard to external defences, the fortifications which are beſt adapted to the colonies are ſquadrons of ſhips conſtantly ſtationed there, and a number of veſſels perpetually cruiſing. Theſe are the citadels which ought to be employed, and they will have the good effect of training ſeamen and officers to man our fleets, and to

make

make the national flag reſpected in every quarter of the globe.

"If, in the middle of ſuch important intereſts, I am permitted, gentlemen, to mention my own zeal, I would renew the aſſurances I formerly gave, that none of the obſtacles which are thrown in my way will diminiſh it. The buſineſs of adminiſtration, perhaps the moſt important, but certainly the moſt complicated, will undoubtedly fill up every moment of my time. Obſerve, gentlemen, that my office participates in the buſineſs of all the other branches of adminiſtration, beſides having buſineſs peculiarly of its own. It comprehends men of all nations, of all colours, and with every kind of prejudice; military men of all deſcriptions; it requires the greateſt reſponſibility; exacts upon every ſubject the moſt active and perpetual vigilance. Conſider, then, if it be poſſible, that the man who is occupied with ſo immenſe a charge can hope to execute it, if he be diverted from ſuch important concerns by perpetual accuſations of ſo contemptible a nature, as to bring diſgrace

upon the uſeful meaſure of impeachment.

" But do not imagine, gentlemen, that I mean, by this, to turn your attention from that particular one which is pointed at me; I wiſh only to warn your wiſdom againſt thoſe general ones directed againſt all the king's miniſters, and which we have the more reaſon to expect, becauſe our determined exactitude in executing the new laws, and in reforming the abuſes, will excite againſt us all the perſons who lived by thoſe abuſes, and who muſt ſuffer by their reform. You will eaſily conceive that our preſent calumniators would become our greateſt applauders, if leſs occupied with public than with private concerns, we were capable of ſacrificing our principles, and did not eſteem the approbation of our own conſciences, and the good of the country, as the beſt recompence of upright miniſters *."

This concluſion being more adapted to the capacity of the audience in the tribune,

* *Vide* the Appendix, No. IV.

than

than the important diſcuſſion which was the ſubject of my diſcourſe, gained me great applauſe. This teſtimony of approbation was abſolutely neceſſary for every miniſter, while he ſpoke to the aſſembly, not only to procure him attention, but likewiſe to prevent him from being hiſſed and inſulted when he went out of the aſſembly. I did not, therefore, think it beneath me to take every method of inſuring this ſort of protection. I was particularly ſucceſsful on Thurſday the 19th of January, when I went, accompanied by all the miniſters, to refute the firſt report which the marine committee made againſt me, in which I was accuſed of an intention to ſubvert the conſtitution. The ſentence which I pronounced in anſwer to this accuſation was more particularly attended to than the other parts of my diſcourſe, and was generally applauded in the tribunes.

" I am accuſed," ſaid I, " of being an enemy to the conſtitution. I openly declare that my firm opinion is, that the ſafety of France depends on its being adhered to.

And I muſt add, that it is not thoſe who expreſs the greateſt enthuſiaſm for the conſtitution who obſerve it moſt rigidly. It is only by our actions that we can prove our fidelity; and I defy my accuſers to point out a ſingle act of my adminiſtration which is not conformable to this conſtitution *."

Such was really my opinion at that period, and ſuch was the conſtant principle of my conduct during my miniſtry. And I ſtill believe, that if this opinion had been more general, the revolution would have had no other conſequences than the reformation of all thoſe abuſes which were its firſt object.

* See the Journals of that period, and particularly the Mercury of the 28th of January 1792.

APPENDIX.

No. I.

Séance Royale du Mardi 23 Juin 1789.

Diſcours du Roi.

" Meſſieurs,

" JE croyois avoir fait tout ce qui étoit en mon pouvoir pour le bien de mes peuples, lorſque j'avois pris la réſolution de vous raſſembler ; lorſque j'avois ſurmonté toutes les difficultés dont votre convocation étoit entourée; lorſque j'étois allé, pour ainſi dire, au-devant des vœux de la nation, en manifeſtant à l'avance ce que je voulois faire pour ſon bonheur.

" Il ſembloit que vous n'aviez qu'à finir mon ouvrage, et la nation attendoit avec impatience le moment où, par le concours des vues bienfaiſantes de ſon ſouverain, et du zèle éclairé de ſes répréſentaux, elle alloit jouir des proſpérités que cette union devoit leur procurer.

" Les états généraux ſont ouverts depuis près des deux mois, et ils n'ont point pu encore s'entendre ſur les préliminaires de leurs opérations. Une parfaite intelligence auroit dû naître du ſeul amour de la patrie, et une funeſte diviſion jette l'allarme dans tous les eſprits. Je veux le croire, et j'aime à le penſer, les Français ne ſont pas changés. Mais, pour éviter de faire à aucun de vous des reproches, je conſidere que le renouvellement des états généraux, après un ſi long terme, l'agitation qui l'a précédé, le but de cette convocation, ſi différent de celui qui raſſembloit vos ancêtres, les réſtrictions dans les pouvoirs, et pluſieurs autres circonſtances, ont dû néceſſairement amener des oppoſitions, des débats, et des prétenſions exagérées.

" Je dois au bien commun de mon royaume, je me dois à moi-même de faire ceſſer ces funeſtes diviſions. C'eſt dans cette réſolution, meſſieurs, que je vous raſſemble de nouveau autour de moi ; c'eſt comme le père commun de tous mes ſujets, c'eſt comme le défenſeur des loix de mon royaume,

aume, que je viens en retracer le véritable eſprit, et réprimer les atteintes qui ont pu y être portées.

" Mais, meſſieurs, après avoir établi clairement les droits reſpectifs des différens ordres, j'attends du zèle pour la patrie, des deux premiers ordres, j'attends de leur attachement pour ma perſonne, j'attends de la connoiſſance qu'ils ont des maux urgens de l'état, que dans les affaires qui regardent le bien général, ils ſeront les premiers à propoſer une réunion d'avis et de ſentimens, que je regarde comme néceſſaire dans la criſe actuelle, qui doit opérer de ſalut de l'état."

Un des ſécretaires d'état a lû enſuite la déclaration ſuivante :

Déclaration du Roi, concernant la préſente terme des Etats Généraux *.

ART. I.

" *Le roi veut que l'ancienne diſtinction des trois ordres de l'état ſoit conſervée en ſon en-*

* Cette déclaration étoit conforme au vœu de la nation exprimé dans la majorité des cayers, et les deux articles, qui ſont en lettres italiques, ſont les ſeuls qui n'ayent pas été propoſés par M. Necker.

tier, comme eſſentiellement liée à la conſtitution de ſon royaume ; que les députés librement élus par chacun des trois ordres, formant trois chambres, délibérant par ordre, et pouvant, avec l'approbation du ſouverain convenir de délibérer en commun, puiſſent ſeuls être conſidérés comme formant le corps des repréſentans de la nation. En conſéquence le roi a déclaré nulles les délibérations priſes par les députés de l'ordre du tiers état, le 17 de ce mois, ainſi que celles qui auroient pu s'enſuivre, comme illégales et inconſtitutionnelles.

ART. II.

" Sa majeſté déclare valides tous les pouvoirs vérifiés ou à vérifier dans chaque chambre, ſur leſquels il ne s'eſt point élevé ou ne s'élevéra point de conteſtation : ordonne ſa majeſté qu'il en ſera donné communication reſpective entre les ordres.

" Quant aux pouvoirs qui pourroient être conteſtés dans chaque ordre, et ſur leſquels les parties intéreſſées ſe pourvoiroient, il y ſera ſtatué, pour la préſente tenue des états généraux ſeulement, ainſi qu'il ſera ci-après ordonné.

ART.

ART. III.

" Le roi caſſe et annulle, comme anti-conſtitutionnelles, contraires aux lettres de convocation, et oppoſées à l'intérêt de l'état, les réſtrictions des pouvoirs, qui, en gênant la liberté des députés aux états généraux, les empêcheroient d'adopter les formes de delibération priſes ſéparément par ordre ou en commun, par le vœu diſtinct des trois ordres.

ART. IV.

" Si, contre l'intention du roi, quelques uns des députés avoient fait le ſerment téméraire de ne point s'écarter d'une forme de délibération quelconque, ſa majeſté laiſſe à leur conſcience de conſidérer ſi les diſpoſitions quelle va régler, s'écartent de la lettre ou de l'eſprit de l'engagement qu'ils auroient pris.

ART. V.

" Le roi permet aux députés qui ſe croiront gênés par leurs mandats, de demander à leurs commettans un nouveau pouvoir:

pouvoir: mais ſa majeſté leur enjoint de reſter en attendant aux états généraux, pour aſſiſter à toutes les délibérations ſur les affaires preſſantes de l'état, et y donner un avis conſultatif.

ART. VI.

" Sa majeſté déclare que dans les tenues ſuivantes d'états généraux, elle ne ſouffrira pas que les cahiers ou les mandats puiſſent être jamais conſidérés comme impératifs; ils ne doivent être que de ſimples inſtructions confiées à la conſcience et à la libre opinion des députés dont on aura fait choix.

ART. VII.

" Sa majeſté ayant exhorté, pour le ſalut de l'état, les trois ordres à ſe réunir pendant cette tenue d'états ſeulement, *pour délibérer en commun ſur les affaires, d'une utilité générale*, veut faire connoître ſes intentions ſur la manière dont il pourra y être procédé.

ART. VIII.

" Seront nommément exceptées des affaires qui pourront être traitées en commun, celles

celles qui regardent les droits antiques et conſtitutionnels des trois ordres, la forme de conſtitution à donner aux prochains états généraux les propriétés féodales et ſeigneuriales, les droits utiles et les prérogatives honorifiques des deux premiers ordres.

ART. IX.

" Le conſentement particulier du clergé ſera néceſſaire pour toutes les diſpoſitions qui pourroient intéreſſer la religion, la diſcipline eccléſiaſtique, le régime des ordres, et corps ſéculiers et réguliers.

ART. X.

" Les délibérations à prendre par les trois ordres réunis, ſur les pouvoirs conteſtés, et ſur leſquels les parties intéreſſées ſe pourvoiroient aux états généraux, ſeront priſes à la pluralité des ſuffrages; mais ſi les deux tiers des voix, dans l'un des trois ordres, réclamoient encore la délibération de l'aſſemblée, l'affaire ſera rapportée au roi, pour y être définitivement ſtatué par ſa majeſté.

ART.

ART. XI.

" Si dans la vue de faciliter la réunion des trois ordres, ils deſiroient que les délibérations qu'ils auront à prendre en commun, paſſaſſent ſeulement à la pluralité des deux tiers des voix, ſa majeſté eſt diſpoſée à autoriſer cette forme.

ART. XII.

" Les affaires qui auront été décidées dans les aſſemblées des trois ordres réunis ſeront remiſes le lendemain en délibération, ſi cent membres de l'aſſemblée ſe réuniſſent pour en faire la demande.

ART. XIII.

" Le roi deſire que dans cette circonſtance, et pour ramener les eſprits à la conciliation, les trois chambres commencent à nommer ſéparément une commiſſion compoſée du nombre de députés qu'elles jugeront convenable, pour préparer la forme et la diſtribution des bureaux de conférences qui devront traiter les différentes affaires.

ART.

ART. XIV.

" L'aſſemblée générale des députés des trois ordres ſera préſidée par les préſidens choiſis par chacun des ordres, et ſelon leur rang ordinaire.

ART. XV.

" Le bon ordre, la décence, et la liberté même des ſuffrages, exigent que ſa majeſté défende, comme elle le fait expreſſement, qu'aucune perſonne, autre que les membres des trois ordres compoſant les états généraux, puiſſent aſſiſter à leurs délibérations, ſoit qu'ils les prennent en commun ou ſéparément."

Le roi a pris la parole et a dit :

" J'ai voulu auſſi, meſſieurs, vous faire remettre ſous les yeux les différens bienfaits que j'accorde à mes peuples. Ce n'eſt pas pour circonſcrire votre zèle dans le cercle que je vais tracer ; car j'adopterai avec plaiſir toute autre vue de bien public qui ſera propoſée par les états généraux. Je puis dire, ſans me faire illuſion, que jamais roi

n'en a autant fait pour aucune nation: mais quelle autre peut l'avoir mieux mérité par ſes ſentimens, que la nation Françaiſe! Je ne craindrai pas de l'exprimer: ceux qui par des prétentions exagérées, ou par des difficultés hors de propos, retarderoient encore l'effet de mes intentions paternelles, ſe rendroient indignes d'être regardés comme Français."

Ce diſcours a été ſuivi de la lecture de la déclaration que voici:

Déclaration des intentions du Roi.

ART. I.

" Aucun nouvel impôt ne ſera établi, aucun ancien ne ſera prorogé au-déla du terme fixé par les loix, ſans le conſentement des répréſentans de la nation.

ART. II.

" Les impoſitions nouvelles qui ſeront établies, ou les anciennes qui ſeront prorogées, ne le ſeront que pour l'intervalle qui devra s'écouler juſqu'à l'époque de la tenue ſuivante des états généraux.

ART. III.

" Les emprunts pouvant devenir l'occaſion néceſſaire d'un accroiſſement d'impôts, aucun n'aura lieu ſans le conſentement des états généraux, ſous la condition toutefois, qu'en cas de guerre, ou d'autre danger national, le ſouverain aura la faculté d'emprunter ſans délai, juſqu'à la concurrence d'une ſomme de *cent millions*; car l'intention formelle du roi eſt de ne jamais mettre le ſalut de ſon empire dans la dépendance de perſonne.

ART. IV.

" Les états généraux examineront avec ſoin la ſituation des finances, et ils démanderont tous les renſeignemens propres à les éclairer parfaitement.

ART. V.

" Le tableau des revenus et des dépenſes ſera rendu public chaque année, dans une forme propoſée par les états généraux, et approuvée par ſa majeſté.

ART.

ART. VI.

" Les ſommes attribuées à chaque département ſeront déterminées d'une manière fixe et invariable, et le roi ſoumet à cette règle générale les fonds même qui ſont deſtinés à l'entretien de ſa maiſon.

ART. VII.

" Le roi veut que pour aſſurer cette fixité des diverſes dépenſes de l'état, il lui ſoit indiqué par les états généraux les diſpoſitions propres à remplir ce but; et ſa majeſté les adoptera ſi elles s'accordent avec la dignité royale et la célérité indiſpenſable du ſervice public.

ART. VIII.

" Les répréſentans d'une nation fidèle aux loix de l'honneur et de la probité ne donneront aucune atteinte à la foi publique et le roi attend d'eux que la confiance des créanciers de l'état ſoit aſſurée et conſolidée de la manière la plus authentique.

ART.

ART. IX.

" Lorſque les diſpoſitions formelles annoncées par le clergé et la nobleſſe de renoncer à leurs priviléges pécuniaires, auront été réaliſées par leurs délibérations, l'intention du roi eſt de les ſanctionner; et qu'il n'exiſte plus dans le paiement des contributions pécuniaires aucune eſpèce de priviléges ou diſtinctions.

ART. X.

" Le roi veut que pour conſacrer une diſpoſition ſi importante, le nom de *taille* ſoit aboli dans le royaume, et qu'on réuniſſe cet impôt, ſoit aux vingtièmes, ſoit à toute autre impoſition territoriale, ou qu'il ſoit enfin remplacé de quelque manière, mais toujours d'après des proportions juſtes, égales, et ſans diſtinction d'état, de rang, et de naiſſance.

ART. XI.

" Le roi veut que le droit de franc-fief ſoit aboli du moment où les revenus et les dépenſes fixes de l'état auront été mis dans une exacte balance.

ART. XII.

" Toutes les propriétés, ſans exception, ſeront conſtament reſpectées, et ſa majeſté comprend expreſſément ſous le nom de propriétés les *dimes*, *cens*, *rentes*, *droits*, et *devoirs féodaux* et *ſeigneuriaux*, et généralement tous les droits et prérogatives utiles ou honorifiques, attachés aux terres et aux fiefs, ou appartenans aux perſonnes.

ART. XIII.

" Les deux premiers ordres de l'état continueront à jouir de l'exemption des charges perſonnelles; mais le roi approuvera que les états généraux s'occuppent des moyens de convertir ces ſortes de charges en contributions pécuniaires, et qu'alors tous les ordres de l'état y ſoyent aſſujettis également.

ART. XIV.

" L'intention de ſa majeſté eſt de déterminer d'après l'avis des états généraux, quels ſeront les emplois et les charges qui conſerveront à l'avenir le privilége de donner et de tranſmettre la nobleſſe. Sa majeſté néanmoins,

néanmoins, ſelon le droit inherent à ſa couronne accordera des lettres des nobleſſe à ceux de ſes ſujets qui, par des ſervices rendus au roi et à l'état, ſe ſeroient montrés dignes de cette récompenſe.

ART. XV.

" Le roi, déſirant aſſurer la liberté perſonnelle de tous les citoyens d'une manière ſolide et durable, invite les états généraux à chercher et à lui propoſer les moyens les plus convenables de concilier l'abolition des ordres connus ſous le nom de *lettres de cachet*, avec le maintien de la ſureté publique et avec les précautions néceſſaires, ſoit pour ménager dans certains cas l'honneur des familles, ſoit pour réprimer avec célérité les commencemens de ſédition, ſoit pour garantir l'état des effets d'une intelligence criminelle avec les puiſſances étrangères.

ART. XVI.

" Les états généraux examineront et feront connoître à ſa majeſté le moyen le plus convenable de concilier la liberté de la preſſe avec le reſpect dû à la religion, aux mœurs, et à l'honneur des citoyens.

ART. XVII.

" Il ſera établi, dans les diverſes provinces ou généralités du royaume, des états provinciaux compoſés de deux dixièmes de membre du clergé dont une partie ſera néceſſairement choiſie dans l'ordre épiſcopal : de trois dixièmes de membres de la nobleſſe, et de cinq dixièmes de membres du tiers état.

ART. XVIII.

" Les membres de ces états provinciaux ſeront librement élus par les ordres reſpectifs, et une méſure quelconque de propriété ſera néceſſaire pour être électeur ou eligible.

ART. XIX.

" Les députés à ces états provinciaux délibéreront dans les aſſemblées provinciales que ces états remplaceront.

ART. XX.

" Une commiſſion intermédiaire choiſie par ces états, adminiſtrera les affaires de la province pendant l'intervalle d'une tenue à l'autre ;

l'autre ; et ces commiſſions intermédiaires devenant ſeules reſponſables de leur geſtion, auront pour délégués des perſonnes choiſies uniquement par elles ou par les états provinciaux.

ART. XXI.

" Les états généraux propoſeront au roi leurs vues pour toutes les autres parties de l'organiſation intérieure des états provinciaux, et pour le choix des formes applicables à l'election des membres de cette aſſemblée.

ART. XXII.

" Indépendamment des objets d'adminiſtration dont les aſſemblées provinciales ſont chargées, le roi confiera aux états provinciaux l'adminiſtration des hôpitaux, des priſons, des dépôts de mendicité, des enfans-trouvés, l'inſpection des dépenſes des villes, la ſurveillance ſur l'entretien des fôrets, ſur la garde et la vente des bois, et ſur d'autres objets qui pourroient être adminiſtrés plus utilement par les provinces.

ART. XXIII.

" Les conteſtations ſurvenues dans les provinces où il exiſte d'anciens états, et les réclamations élevées contre la conſtitution de ces aſſemblées, devront fixer l'attention des états généraux; ils feront connoître à ſa majeſté les diſpoſitions de juſtice et de ſageſſe qu'il eſt convenable d'adopter pour établir un ordre fixe dans l'adminiſtration de ces mêmes provinces.

ART. XXIV.

" Le roi invite les états généraux à s'occupper de la recherche des moyens propres à tirer le parti le plus avantageux des domaines qui ſont dans ſes mains, et de lui propoſer également leurs vues ſur ce qu'il peut y avoir de plus convenable à faire relativement aux domaines engagés.

ART. XXV.

" Les états généraux s'occuperont du projet conçu depuis long tems par ſa majeſté, de porter les douanes aux frontières du royaume, à fin que la plus parfaite liberté règne

règne dans la circulation intérieure des marchandiſes nationales ou étrangères.

ART. XXVI.

" Sa majeſté déſire que les facheux effets de l'impôt ſur le ſel et l'importance de ce revenu ſoyent diſcutés ſoigneuſement et que dans toutes les ſuppoſitions on propoſe, au moins, des moyens d'en adoucir la perception.

ART. XXVII.

" Sa majeſté veut auſſi qu'on examine attentivement les avantages et les inconvéniens des droits d'aides et autres impôts, mais ſans perdre de vue la néceſſité abſolue d'aſſurer une exacte balance entre les revenus et les dépenſes de l'état.

ART. XXVIII.

" Selon le vœu que le roi a manifeſté par ſa déclaration du 23 Septembre dernier, ſa majeſté examinera avec une ſérieuſe attention les projets qui lui ſeront préſentés relativement à l'adminiſtration de la juſtice, et aux moyens de perfectionner les loix civiles et criminelles.

ART. XXIX.

" Le roi veut que les loix qu'il aura fait promulguer pendant la tenue et d'après l'avis ou ſelon le vœu des états généraux, n'éprouvent pour leur enrégiſtrement et pour leur exécution aucun retardement ni aucun obſtacle dans toute l'étendue de ſon royaume.

ART. XXX.

" Sa majeſté veut que l'uſage de la corvée pour la confection et l'entretien des chemins ſoit entièrement et pour toujours aboli dans ſon royaume.

ART. XXXI.

" Le roi déſire que l'abolition du droit de main-morte, dont ſa majeſté a donné l'exemple dans ſes domaines, ſoit étendue dans toute la France, et qu'il lui ſoit propoſé les moyens de pourvoir à l'indemnité qui pourroit être dûe aux ſeigneurs en poſſeſſion de ce droit.

ART. XXXII.

" Sa majeſté fera connoître inceſſamment aux états généraux les réglemens dont elle s'occuppe

s'occuppe pour reſtreindre les capitaineries, et donner encore dans cette partie, qui tient de plus près à ſes jouiſſances perſonnelles, un nouveau témoignage de ſon amour pour ſes peuples.

ART. XXXIII.

" Le roi invite les états généraux à conſiderer le tirage de la milice ſous tous ſes rapports, et à s'occupper des moyens de concilier ce qui eſt dû à la défenſe de l'état avec les adouciſſemens que ſa majeſté déſire pouvoir procurer à ſes ſujets.

ART. XXXIV.

" Le roi veut que toutes les diſpoſitions d'ordre public et de bienfaiſance envers ſes peuples, que ſa majeſté aura ſanctionnées par ſon autorité pendant la préſente tenue des états généraux, celles entr'autres relatives à la liberté perſonnelle, à l'égalité des contributions, à l'établiſſement des états provinciaux, ne puiſſent jamais être changées ſans le conſentement des trois ordres, pris ſéparément ; ſa majeſté les place à l'avance

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au rang des propriétés nationales, qu'elle veut mettre comme toutes les autres propriétés, ſous la garde la plus aſſurée.

ART. XXXV.

" Sa majeſté après avoir appellé les états généraux à s'occupper, de concert avec elle, des grands objets d'utilité publique et de tout ce qui peut contribuer au bonheur de ſon peuple, declare de la manière la plus expreſſe qu'elle veut conſerver en ſon entier, et ſans la moindre atteinte, l'inſtitution de l'armée, ainſi que toute autorité, police, et pouvoir ſur le militaire, tels que les monarques François en ont conſtamment joui."

Le roi avant de ſe retirer, a prononcé le diſcours ſuivant.

" Vous venez, meſſieurs, d'entendre le réſultat de mes diſpoſitions et de mes vues; elles ſont conformes au vif deſir que j'ai d'opérer le bien public; et ſi, par une fatalité loin de ma penſée, vous m'abandonniés dans une ſi belle enterpriſe, ſeul, je ferai le bien de mes peuples; ſeul je me conſidé-

rerai comme leur véritable répréſentant ; et connoiſſant vos cahiers, connoiſſant l'accord parfait qui exiſte entre le vœu le plus général de la nation et mes intentions bienfaiſantes, j'aurai toute la confiance que doit inſpirer une ſi rare harmonie, et je marcherai vers le but auquel je veux atteindre avec tout le courage et la fermeté qu'il doit m'inſpirer.

" Réfléchiſſés, meſſieurs, qu'aucun de vos projets, aucune de vos diſpoſitions, ne peut avoir force de loi ſans mon approbation ſpéciale. Ainſi je ſuis le garant naturel de vos droits reſpectifs ; et tous les ordres de l'état peuvent ſe repoſer ſur mon équitable impartialité. Toute défiance de votre part ſeroit un grande injuſtice. C'eſt moi juſqu'à préſent qui fais tout pour le bonheur de mes peuples ; et il eſt rare peut-être que l'unique ambition d'un ſouverain ſoit d'obtenir de ſes ſujets, qu'ils s'entendent enfin pour accepter ſes bienfaits.

" Je vous ordonne, meſſieurs, de vous ſéparer tout de ſuite, et de vous rendre demain

demain matin, chacun dans les chambres affectées à votre ordre, pour y reprendre vos ſéances. J'ordonne, en conſéquence, au grand maître des cérémonies de faire préparer les ſalles."

No. II.

Lettre du Roi à l'Aſſemblée Nationale.

" Paris, le 24 Novembre 1791.

" JE ſuis informé, M. le Préſident, que l'aſſemblée nationale, après avoir entendu le rapport de ſon comité diplomatique ſur la propoſition contenue dans la lettre du miniſtre de la marine, en date du 31 Octobre dernier, concernant les demandes du Dey d'Alger, et les ſommes à voter pour l'armement ordonné à Toulon, a décreté le 15 de ce mois, qu'il n'y avoit pas lieu à délibérer, quant-a-préſent, ſur cette propoſition, attendu qu'elle n'étoit pas dans la forme conſtitutionnelle.

" Je vous ai déjà marqué, relativement aux fonds extraordinaires, deſtinés à la dépenſe extraordinaire qu'exigent les armemens qui doivent porter des ſecours à Saint Domingue, que la conſtitution ne preſcrivoit pas une forme différente de celle que

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le miniſtre de la marine avoit ſuivie en faiſant par mon ordre la demande de ces fonds ſous ſa reſponſibilité ; mais puiſque la même difficulté ſe renouvelle aujourd'hui à l'occaſion de l'armement de prévoyance ſollicité par le commerce de Marſeille, l'obligation que j'ai contractée d'employer tout le pouvoir qui m'eſt confié, à maintenir la conſtitution, m'impoſe le devoir d'en rappeller ici les principes.

" En déterminant de la manière la plus préciſe les différentes relations du roi avec le corps légiſlatif, la conſtitution a eſſentiellement attaché à la prérogative royale le droit de propoſer des loix ſur certains objets, et celui d'inviter le corps légiſlatif à en prendre d'autres en conſidération. L'acte par lequel le roi juge à-propos d'exercer l'un et l'autre de ces droits étant toujours un acte purement royal, de la même nature que la ſanction, n'exige, comme elle, le contreſeing d'un miniſtre, que pour atteſter la ſignature du roi, et n'emporte aucune reſponſabilité ; au lieu que les demandes de fonds, pour les dépenſes ordinaires ou extra-

extraordinaires du gouvernement étant évidemment des actes purement exécutifs doivent toujours émaner directement des miniſtres du roi pour avoir la garantie de leur reſponſabilité. Tel eſt l'eſprit et le ſyſtême général de la conſtitution."

Les diſpoſitions ſuivantes en ont poſé les baſes :

" Le roi peut ſeulement inviter le corps légiſlatif à prendre un objet en conſidération. (Chap. iii. ſect. 1. art. 1.) J'uſerai de cette faculté toutes les fois que la gloire, le bonheur, ou les intérêts de la nation l'exigeront."

" Le paragraphe viii. du même article délégue au corps légiſlatif la faculté, ' de ſtatuer annuellement après la propoſition du roi ſur le nombre d'hommes et de vaiſſeaux, dont les armées de terre et de mer ſeront compoſées, ſur la ſolde et le nombre d'individus de chaque grade,' &c. Je me conformerai à cet article dans les états généraux que j'adreſſerai au commencement de chaque année au corps légiſlatif, et dans les

les propoſitions particulières de la même nature que des circonſtances extraordinaires pourroient exiger dans le cours de l'année.

" 'La guerre ne peut être décidée que par un décrêt du corps légiſlatif rendu ſur la propoſition formelle et néceſſaire du roi, et ſanctionné par lui.' (Chap. iii. ſect. 1. art. 2.) J'eſpère que je ne ſerai jamais dans le cas d'adreſſer une ſemblable propoſition au corps légiſlatif. La paix eſt trop néceſſaire au bonheur de la France pour que je n'emploie pas à la maintenir tous les moyens qui pourront ſe concilier avec l'honneur de la nation.

" La diſpoſition ſuivante du même article porte que, 'Dans le cas d'hoſtilités imminentes ou commencés, d'un allié à ſoutenir, ou d'un droit à conſerver par la force des armes, le roi en donnera, ſans aucun délai, la notification au corps légiſlatif, et en fera connoître les motifs.' Je me conformerai toujours à cette diſpoſition, avec l'extrême circonſpection qu'exige l'intérêt de l'état. Ce ſeroit s'en écarter d'une manière bien dangereuſe, que de notifier au

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corps légiſlatif, comme hoſtilités imminentes de ſimples doutes ſur les diſpoſitions d'une puiſſance étrangère. Cette notification inconſidérée ſeroit bien plus propre à déterminer une rupture qu'à la prévenir. Il ſuffit en pareil cas de prendre les meſures de prévoyance qu'exige la ſûreté extérieure du royaume, et c'eſt au roi que la conſtitution a excluſivement délégué ce ſoin important. (Chap. iv. art. 1.)

" Je m'en ſuis occupé et m'en occuperai toujours avec la vigilance la plus active, et les frais extraordinaires qu'ont exigé juſqu'à ce moment les différens armemens et les mouvemens de troupes que j'ai jugés néceſſaires, ont toujours été ordonnés ſur la ſimple demande du miniſtre de la marine, faite par mes ordres, parce qu'aux termes de la conſtitution, chap. ii. ſect. 4. art. 7. c'eſt ſur l'apperçu des dépenſes à faire dans les départemens reſpectifs, que le corps légiſlatif doit en ordonner les fonds. Cet article ne fait mention que des dépenſes ordinaires, mais il eſt impoſſible de ne pas l'appliquer

aux dépenſes extraordinaires de la même nature.

" La conſtitution ne preſcrivant par une forme différente relativement à ces dépenſes, les à néceſſairement rangées dans la même claſſe, en leur aſſurant la même reſponſabilité par l'art. 8. de la même ſection ; ce qui ne pourroit pas être, ſi elles émanoient immédiatement du roi, au lieu d'être faites par ſes miniſtres qui ſont les agens que la conſtitution lui a donnés pour les actes purement exécutifs.

" L'art. 9. ſect. 4. chap. iii. porte que ' tous les actes de la correſpondance du roi avec le corps légiſlatif doivent être contreſignés par un miniſtre.' Mais ce ſeroit donner à la conſtitution l'interprétation la plus contraire aux principes qui en ſont la baſe, que de conclurre de cet article, qu'aucune des fonctions eſſentielles, confiée au pouvoir exécutif, doive néceſſairement être l'objet de la correſpondance perſonnelle du roi avec le corps légiſlatif, parce qu'il en réſulteroit évidemment pour toutes les fonctions qui ſeroient rangées dans cette claſſe

claſſe un deffaut entier de reſponſabilité, et une inaction abſolue dans la marche de l'adminiſtration, toutes les fois qu'il plairoit au roi de garder le ſilence. La conſtitution, ſans déterminer aucun cas où la correſpondance perſonnelle du roi avec le corps légiſlatif ſeroit néceſſaire à voulu ſeulement que tous les actes de cette correſpondance fuſſent contre-ſignés par un miniſtre ; elle n'a pas été plus loin ; je dois m'arrêter avec elle, parcequ'elle interdit formellement à tous les pouvoirs conſtitués le droit de la changer dans ſon enſemble ni dans ſes parties.

(Signé) LOUIS.

Et plus bas, par le roi, BERTRAND."

No. III.

Lettre de Rouyer au Roi.

"SIRE,

"L'UN des citoyens à qui le peuple a confié la pénible et glorieuſe miſſion de lui donner des lois et de veiller à ſon bonheur, vient appeller votre attention ſur l'état actuel du royaume, et vous propoſer les moyens d'aſſurer ſa gloire et ſa félicité. Profondément occupé des maux qui déchirent ma patrie, j'ai dû compter auſſi ſes innombrables reſſources; j'ai ſondé ſes bleſſures, et calculé ſes forces; j'ai tout comparé, tout approfondi, tout prévu: aujourd'hui j'annonce à votre majeſté, que d'elle ſeule dépend l'exécution des lois, et par conſéquent le ſalut de l'empire; qu'elle peut en deux mots cicatriſer ſes plaies, diſſiper ſes alarmes, annihiler ſes périls; qu'elle peut rendre à la France le repos qui

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la fuit, la dignité qui lui convient, et au trône l'amour qui l'affermit avec l'éclat qui le décore. Sire, je ne demande, pour exécuter ce noble deſſein, que la direction des moyens que la loi vous confie, et l'emploi des forces que la conſtitution place dans vos mains, et j'offre ma tête pour gage de la fidélité des mes promeſſes, de la ſageſſe de mon plan, et de la certitude de vos ſuccès. Et ne croyez point, ſire, que le zèle du bien public ennobliſſant à mes yeux les illuſions de l'amour propre, j'embraſſe ſans examen l'eſpoir conſolant de vous rendre le bonheur (car le vôtre dépend de celui de l'état). Je ſais que des obſtacles nombreux s'oppoſent au développement de la puiſſance publique et combattent ſans ceſſe les bienfaits de la loi. Je vous par-tout la ſédition qui s'agite et l'autorité qui ſe cache, l'anarchie qui s'élève et le gouvernement qui n'oſel a comprimer : vos miniſtres, ſire, vous ont offert trop ſouvent ce tableau funeſte ; ils vous ont annoncé les troubles ſans vous en expliquer les cauſes ; et s'ils ont conçu l'idée de les terminer, ils ont été ſans ceſſe ar-

trêtés par des obſtacles et des périls exagérés. Je les connois et je les brave ; la foibleſſe les compte, le génie les détruit, et laiſſe à l'hiſtoire le ſoin de les décrire quand il les a dévorés.

" Voilà, ſire, les glorieux travaux auxquels je vous invite, en vous apportant le tribut de mon courage, de mes forces morales et phyſiques, et de mon profond reſpect. Agréez l'hommage d'un citoyen que des bruits impoſteurs vous ont préſenté peut-être comme un homme ardent, ennemi de l'ordre et du trône ; mais qui, commandant à la renommée par ſes actions, prouvera par-tout que la nature et l'honneur ont gravé dans ſon ame l'amour de ſa patrie et de ſon roi.

" Sire, je le répète encore à votre majeſté, je m'engage à rétablir, dans deux mois, la paix au-dedans, la conſidération au-dehors, la félicité publique et l'autorité royale, ſi vous daignez adopter les conſeils que mon zèle vous dictera. Je n'ambitionne ni le faſte des honneurs, ni la gloire des récompenſes ; je ne veux rien que ſauver

ver mon pays ; vous pouvez beaucoup y contribuer, et j'aime à croire que vous n'avez beſoin que d'en connoître les moyens : j'irai les découvrir à votre majeſté ; j'irai vous révéler ce que vos miniſtres vous cachent, ou vous apprendre ce qu'ils ignorent : vous verrez par vous-même l'état de l'empire ; vous apprécierez les hommes auxquels la loi vous permet de commander ; vous entendrez ceux que le peuple environne de ſa confiance ; et ſi vous embraſſez le ſyſtême de conduite que je vous offrirai, vous verrez les ſoupçons et les allarmes qu'on a ſemés autour de vous, diſſipés par l'amour et le reſpect de tous le Français. Vous verrez le pouvoir que la conſtitution vous donne, accrû par l'opinion, ſoutenu par l'eſtime, affermi par la confiance de tous les citoyens ; et la Reine, partageant avec votre majeſté le réſultat du bonheur public, ſentira qu'il n'eſt de félicité pure que celle qui naît de la bienfaiſance et des vertus. Mais aucune partie de ce plan ne pourroit s'exécuter, ſi votre majeſté n'étoit pas animée du deſir ſincère de conſerver,

dans ſon enſemble et dans ſes détails, la conſtitution de l'état; ſi, troublé par les cris des prêtres fanatiques, les menaces des émigrés rebelles, les démarches des princes étrangers, vous n'étiez pas profondément convaincu de la néceſſité de braver cette ligue impuiſſante qui ſe forme contre nous. Pour moi, ſire, je connois ſi bien nos forces et nos moyens, qu'en jettant les yeux ſur les ennemis qui nous menacent, j'ai peine à me défendre d'un ſentiment de pitié. Elevé à la hauteur de la liberté, de l'égalité, ces divinités coloſſales qui foulent aux pieds toutes les intrigues et toutes les paſſions, j'ai porté mes regards ſur toutes les cours de l'Europe, et je ſuis bien ſûr de les forcer à la paix.

"Oui, ſire, vous pouvez éviter la guerre étrangère, ou du moins créer la paix intérieure par le ſuccès de nos armes; vous pouvez rendre votre autorité plus révérée, plus auguſte, plus étendue; vous pouvez devenir le dieu tutélaire des Français. Par vous, la religion triomphera des indécentes querelles, des intolérantes maximes des Prêtres réfractaires

réfractaires et conſtitutionnels. Par vous, la juſtice et la raiſon pénétreront enfin dans l'ame des ariſtocrates, et vous les ramènerez peut-être au ſein de la patrie déſarmée par leurs remords. Je jouirai dans le ſilence du fruit de mes conſeils et de votre courage; heureux du bonheur de tous, je dirigerai vers vous ſeul la reconnoiſſance publique, et mon cœur ſera ſatisfait. Les ambitieux qui veulent élever l'édifice de leur fortune ſur les débris de la monarchie, les inſenſés qui penſent que la liberté ne peut s'établir que ſur des ſceptres briſés, tous les partis, toutes les cabales ramperont en ſifflant aux pieds d'une trône élevé ſur les baſes de la conſtitution. Les ſociétés populaires, dont on vous fait redouter ſans raiſon l'exaltation, ne ſe réuniront que pour vous adreſſer des vœux et des homages.

" Tel eſt, ſire, le tableau fidèle des changemens que vous pouvez opérer par des moyens dont je vous offre le ſecret et le développement. La méfiance ne doit point aſſiéger votre cœur et lui faire repouſſer un citoyen fidèle. Si, ſur le trône où la naiſſance

naiſſance et la loi vous ont placé, dans les circonſtances pénibles qui vous environnent, je trouvois un ſecours pareil, aucune malveillance, aucune ſuggeſtion étrangère, ne me détermineroient à le rejetter.

" J'attends, ſire, avec une confiance reſpectueuſe, la déciſion de votre majeſté ; ma démarche et ma lettre appellent un examen ; qu'il ſoit ſévère comme la raiſon, impartial comme la juſtice : mais s'il ne procure point une réponſe à laquelle j'attache le ſort de l'état, permettez, ſire, qu'appellant dans cette cauſe extraordinaire ceux dont elle embraſſe les plus chers intérêts, je ſoumette ma lettre au jugement du peuple Français.

(Signé) ROUYER, *Citoyen*.

Paris, ce 17 Mars 1792."

No. IV.

Diſcours prononcé par M. de Bertrand, miniſtre de la marine, à l'aſſemblée nationale, le 19 Décembre 1791, ſur l'état actuel de la colonie de Saint Domingue.

" Meſſieurs,

" JE vous ai rendu compte des meſures priſes par le roi pour envoyer des ſecours aux habitants de Saint Domingue, auſſitôt que leurs malheurs et leurs dangers ont été connus de ſa majeſté. Inſuffiſans en eux-mêmes, ſans doute, leur ſuccès dépendoit uniquement de leur célérité, et de l'aſſurance qu'ils ſeroient ſuivis de plus importans. Mais avant de les déterminer, il a fallu connoître les véritables cauſes des troubles qui ont amené cette grande cataſtrophe; je n'ai rien négligé pour les découvrir, parceque cette découverte pouvoit ſeule diriger dans l'application des moyens qui doivent en prévenir le retour.

" Les

" Les uns accuſent les colons d'avoir voulu ſe donner aux Anglois: ' Depuis qu'on a détruit (diſent-ils) la féodalité en France, les planteurs ont juſtement redouté chez eux la deſtruction d'une tyrannie plus barbare encore; et prévoyant que la terre claſſique de la liberté et de l'égalité ne pouvoit protéger l'eſclavage, ils veulent rompre tous leurs liens avec elle.'

" On cite à l'appui de cette accuſation, des démarches inconſidérées de quelques-uns d'entre eux; des diſcours tenus dans un mouvement de colère, par des hommes dont les paſſions terribles ſous un ciel brûlant, ſont d'autant plus faciles à s'irriter de la moindre contrariété, qu'ils ſont moins accoutumés à en éprouver, moins habitués à ſe contraindre.

" D'autres, au contraire, ne voyent la cauſe de leurs maux que dans les écrits incendiaires répandus dans les colonies à deſſein de ſoulever les nègres; dans les correſpondances entretenues depuis long-temps entre les gens de couleur et une ſociété dite de *philantropes*, fondée ſur un ſyſtème deſtructeur,

ſtructeur, diſent-ils, de toutes propriétés coloniales, et dont voici l'origine et les principes.

" On conçoit ſans peine que pour un peuple libre, et qui a toujours été digne de l'être, les premières jouiſſances qu'il devoit à ces établiſſemens, ayent été troublées par le regret de ne les devoir qu'au malheur de l'eſclavage.

" Cet élan d'une nation généreuſe et ſenſible, qui l'honore d'autant plus, qu'il eſt irréfléchi; ce reproche, cette eſpèce de remords qui n'a pas beſoin d'être juſte ou fondé, pour faire eſtimer celui qui l'éprouve, devoit affecter tous les Français; et la manière de traiter leurs nègres plus douce, plus humaine que celle des autres peuples, devoit en être le fruit.

" C'eſt-là que ſe bornèrent d'abord les effets d'un ſentiment ſi naturel et ſi ſage. L'eſprit philoſophique qui dominoit en France, plus ambitieux, crut devoir pouſſer plus loin la conquête, et rendre ces regrets plus productifs; il appuya de toutes les forces

forces du raiſonnement, la théorie d'un ſentiment qu'il eût peut-être ſuffi d'éprouver.

" D'après leur ſyſtême, les colonies, ces poſſeſſions pour leſquelles on faiſoit gémir l'humanité et fléchir les principes, n'avoient pas l'importance que la cupidité leur avoit prêtée juſqu'alors, et elles étoient ruineuſes pour la nation abuſée. Le poſſibilité de les remplacer par des poſſeſſions plus rapprochées, ſous un climat de même temperature (celui de l'Afrique et des îles de la Mediterranée, par exemple), la néceſſité de ſe détacher un jour de ces terres éloignées, habitées par des hommes dont tout faiſoit prévoir et l'ingratitude et l'infidélité, &c.; tous ces motifs réunis ne firent enviſager dans cet abandon volontaire qu'une anticipation d'évènemens auxquelles on devoit s'attendre, et l'avantage de s'y préparer, en ouvrant d'avance des ſources d'une utilité plus durable. Nos voiſins plus ſages, avoient fait de pareils calculs par rapport à leurs colonies du nord de l'Amérique, pour prouver par les ſommes employées à

les ſoutenir, qu'elles leur étoient onéreuſes ; mais c'étoit pour ſe conſoler de les avoir perdues ; mais c'étoient des colonies continentales, qui n'avoient de reſſemblance que le nom avec les colonies de l'archipel Américain.

" Cette différence ne frappa point tous les eſprits ; et quand les intérêts du commerce parurent ſeconder l'intérêt de l'humanité, le nombre des philantropes s'accrut de tous ceux dont la ſenſibilité avoit beſoin pour être émue, d'autres motifs que ceux de la philantropie.

" ' C'eſt un ſyſtême (diſent les colons) dont l'erreur et les jeux cruels ont produit les ſcènes ſanglantes dont nous avons été les victimes. Suivez à la trace, diſent-ils, les mouvemens et les effets de ce zèle proſélitique, qui avoit d'abord préché l'abolition de l'eſclavage et la liberté abſolue des nègres ; qui modérant enſuite ſes prétentions, pour mieux graduer ſes progrès, ſut les borner à la ſuppreſſion de la traite, et qui enfin par une marche plus adroite et plus ſûre, paroit avoir circonſcrit ſon intérêt au

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ſort des gens de couleur, pour nous perdre plus ſûrement. Croiroit-on impoſſible qu'un ſyſtême dont l'humanité ſemble être la baſe, fût capable de produire des effets auſſi cruels : l'hiſtoire de ces mêmes climats ne fournit-elle pas un trait dont l'analogie et la reſſemblance ne peut qu'honorer les philantropes les plus délicats ? N'eſt-ce pas au ſenſible et pieux Las-Cazas, que l'Amérique doit ſes nègres! N'eſt-ce pas ce vertueux Eſpagnol qui, touché des maux que ſes concitoyens faiſoient ſouffrir aux naturels du pays, en les acablent de travaux, courut en Afrique chercher des hommes, qui déjà dévoués à l'eſclavage, puſſent ſans aggravation de maux et par un ſimple échange de chaînes, ſous un climat pareil à celui de leur pays natal, remplacer l'Américain foible, qui auſſi peu fait à la fatigue qu'à l'eſclavage, ſuccomboit également ſous le poids du travail et *ſous celui des fers!* Si ce pieux miſſionaire ſe repentit du moyen que lui ſuggéra ſon humanité trompée, il n'en eſt pas moins vrai que pour avoir voulu ſauver quelques Caraïbes qui avoient ſurvécu à

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tant de peines, il y dévoua des milliers d'individus, que la cupidité, excitée par ſes nombreux achats d'eſclaves en Afrique, fit condamner à le devenir. Suppoſez aux philantropes modernes des intentions auſſi pures, il n'en ſera pas moins vrai que pour avoir tenté d'abolir l'eſclavage des noirs, ils auront réduit au déſeſpoir, à la misère, cinq ou ſix millions d'individus blancs, leurs concitoyens, leurs amis, leurs frères, et renverſé une des plus fortes colonnes de la puiſſance nationale : il n'en ſera pas moins vrai qu'ils n'auroient pas même fait le bonheur de ceux qu'ils avoient voulu ſervir ; qu'il eût fallu pour l'opérer, le concours de tous les états qui poſsèdent des colonies, et que l'abolition de l'eſclavage devoit être l'action ſimultanée de toutes les puiſſances intéreſſées. Sans cet accord d'action et de volonté que l'on ſuppoſe ſi facile à obtenir, les colonies n'ont que le choix d'un protecteur, et les eſclaves celui d'un maître. Ces derniers peuvent bien partiellement, et comme ils nous l'ont trop cruellement prouvé, nous égorger, nous, nos

femmes, nos enfans, et tous ceux qui les commandent; mais ce ſera pour obéir à d'autres, et ſur cette eſpèce de galère que de triſtes deſtinées ont placée au milieu des mers, ſur ces bancs où la philantropie aveugle à conduit elle-même et fixé l'eſclavage, le ſoulèvement de la chiourme ne fera que rendre ſon ſort plus miſerable.'

" Tels ſont, meſſieurs, les moyens de défenſe et d'attaque tour-à-tour employés par les planteurs et par leurs antagoniſtes. C'eſt ſous le rapport purement adminiſtratif que j'ai dû examiner les cauſes, quelles qu'elles ſoient, qui ont amené les troubles de Saint Domingue, afin de mettre en uſage les moyens propres à les prévenir.

" Quant à l'inculpation faite aux colons, d'avoir voulu ſe donner aux Anglois, aux Américains, je ne connois rien, je n'ai rien vu, qui annonce un projet auſſi coupable. D'ailleurs, comment ſeroient-ils arrivés à cette fin, en ſoulevant les nègres contre eux, en faiſant piller et ravager leurs poſſeſſions ? Pourquoi, en s'offrant à une nouvelle métropole, auroient-ils voulu ne lui preſenter

préſenter qu'un monceau de cendres et de ruines ? .... Quant au deſſein de ſe rendre indépendans, aucun fait de leur part n'annonce un projet auſſi extravagant ; et leur poſition et leur foibleſſe, à leur nature même leur fait un devoir, un beſoin de la dépendance.....On les a même accuſés de vouloir opérer une contre-révolution ; j'avoue que pour quiconque ne peut croire à la poſſibilité d'une contre-révolution en France, les moyens de l'opérer à 1800 lieues de la mère-patrie, paroiſſent encore plus étranges, et appelleroient le ridicule ſur l'accuſation, ſi le ſpectacle de tant de maux pouvoit permettre d'autres ſenſations que des affections douloureuſes. Quant à l'accuſation portée contre les partiſans de la liberté des noirs, je ne puis pas diſſimuler qu'elle paroît beaucoup plus fondée ; mais, quelle que ſoit la cauſe de ces déſaſtres, par quels ſecours faut-il les réparer, par quels moyens faut-il en empêcher le retour?

" Le premier de tous et le plus utile ſans doute, eſt la connoiſſance de nos véritables intérêts et de nos vrais rapports commerci-

aux avec les colonies, puiſque l'ignorance de ces principes eſt la première ſource de tant d'erreurs et de tant de calamités.

" Il faut conſidérer nos colonies à ſucre comme autant de manufactures établies à 1800 lieues de la métropole; et la métropole elle-même comme une ſociété de capitaliſtes qui ont fourni aux frais de cet établiſſement d'agriculture et d'induſtrie, ſoit pour le fonder, ſoit pour l'entretenir, ſoit pour le protéger. Tous les membres de la métropole ſont actionnaires de cette importante ſpéculation; pour en partager les bénéfices, on n'a beſoin que de naître en France, et tous les citoyens Français, tous, oui, tous ſont intéreſſés à ſa proſpérité, quoiqu'à des titres différens; les uns comme agriculteurs et propriétaires de terres, qui en tout ou en partie, ſont cultivées pour fournir aux beſoins de ces conſommateurs lointains, et qui ſeroient ruinés ſans cet important débouché de leur denrée; les autres, comme poſſeſſeurs de quelque genre d'induſtrie, exercé en tout ou en partie pour les beſoins des colons, et dont les pro-

duits ſeroient invendus ; les autres enfin, comme commerçans, navigateurs, caboteurs, &c. troiſième claſſe chargée de leur apporter les productions des deux autres. Quelque place qu'on occupe dans cette ſociété, quelle que ſoit la ſomme et la nature d'actions qu'on y porte, depuis le cultivateur laborieux juſqu'au capitaliſte oiſif, depuis l'induſtrieux manouvrier, juſqu'à l'agioteur ſtérile, depuis le hardi ſpéculateur, juſqu'au timide rentier, tous, oui, tous ſont intéreſſés au ſort de ces riches établiſſemens ; et, comme on l'a dit encore, il n'eſt pas juſqu'à la calomnie qui, par eux, ne débite avec profit ſes poiſons.

" De quelque manière qu'on les dirige ou qu'on les adminiſtre, ces établiſſemens conſervent toujours leur caractère primitif d'entrepriſe formée par la métropole, dont elle ſeule doit recevoir le bénéfice et ſupporter les pertes. Dans le tems même ou legouvernement, abuſé ſi l'on veut, en accordoit la jouiſſance ou le commerce excluſif à des ſociétés particulières, à des compagnies, il ne faiſoit que céder à quelques-

uns le droit de tous, mas à des conditions qui devoient tourner au profit de tous. C'étoit une mine que l'état affermoit, au lieu de l'exploiter lui-même : peut-être diminuoit-il les avantages de la grande ſociété en faveur d'une plus petite : je ne cite cet exemple qu'àfin de prouver que, même dans ces contrats excluſifs, les produits de nos colonies ont été une entrepriſe à laquelle toute la nation étoit intéreſſée.

" Quant aux calculs des ſommes que ces établiſſemens ont coûté, en ſuppoſant qu'ils ne fuſſent pas exagérés, comment apprécier par de l'or et des chiffres les avantages que les Européens retirent de leurs colonies ? Peut-on ne pas voir dans l'accroiſſement ſenſible de notre population, le ſeul ſigne certain de proſpérité publique, ſigne infaillible, qui marque tout-à-la-fois l'abondance des denrées et le beſoin de bras (car les hommes naiſſent toujours là où les ſubſiſtances abondent, là ou le travail les appelle) ? ne voit-on pas que l'obligation de ne vendre ſes productions qu'à des membres de la ſociété ou de la métropole, et de n'acheter

cheter que d'eux ſeuls les objets de leurs beſoins, forme une double ſource de richeſſes, dont la meſure eſt inappréciable? Si l'on conſidéroit les colonies, ou comme des provinces de l'empire, ou comme des états alliés, ce double monopole ſeroit l'impôt le plus onéreux et le plus injuſte, le commerce le plus déſavantageux, l'échange le plus inégal qui ait jamais été propoſé entre deux parties d'un même empire, ou entre deux empires différens. En effet, les colonies ſont obligées de n'acheter que de nous les objets de leur conſommation, et ce premier monopole nous les fait vendre à un prix bien avantageux; elles s'obligent enſuite à ne livrer qu'à nous ſeuls tous leurs riches produits, et nous procurent à un prix modique, non-ſeulement ce qui ſuffit à la conſommation de 25 millions d'hommes, mais encore un excédant immenſe que ceux-ci vendent avec bénéfice aux nations qui n'ont pas de colonies. Et tous ces avantages s'eſtimeroient par une ſérie de chiffres, qui n'exprimant que des vérités de quantité, ne peuvent s'appliquer avec ſuccès

qu'à des objets inanimés, matériellement ſuſceptibles de retranchement ou d'addition ; d'autant plus certaines, qu'elles ſont plus iſolées, plus abſtraites, et bornées à leur unique fonction de *meſures :* meſures dont l'application rigoureuſe à la proſpérité publique, aux gouvernemens, à tout ce qui tient aux hommes réunis en ſociété, préſente les réſultats les plus abſurdes, et qui nous expliquent, pour le dire en paſſant, comment les ſciences les plus exactes une fois ſorties du cercle des objets auxquels elles ſont applicables, deviennent entre les mains de guides ambitieux, des ſignaux trompeurs qui ne ſervent qu'à égarer l'eſprit qu'ils devoient éclairer.

" Obſervez, meſſieurs, que ces erreurs funeſtes donneroient néceſſairement à la fortune publique une marche rétrograde; ce ne ſeroit plus le mouvement de cette roue de puiſſance qu'il faudroit modérer, c'eſt ſon mouvement même qu'il faudroit bruſquement arrêter : c'eſt à l'inſtant, qu'il faudroit condamner à la plus grande inertie ces millions de bras employés juſqu'ici à

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la faire mouvoir, qu'il faudroit couper tous les fils qui ſervent à nous amener cette immenſité de richeſſes. Vous apprécierez, Meſſieurs, les terribles effets de cette ſubite interſection.

" C'eſt en conſidérant les colonies ſous leur véritable rapport, qu'on ſent la néceſſité de déterminer pour elles un régime qui diffère des loix applicables à la France entière, ou à un département, ſans que cet exemple faſſe même une exception. Combien l'aſſemblee conſtituante montra de ſageſſe, lorſqu'elle laiſſa à votre déciſion l'admiſſion ou le refus des repréſentans de colonies, qu'on pouvoit regarder comme des repréſentans d'une corporation ou d'une manufacture ! Tout s'explique en les examinant ſous ce rapport. En effet, à les conſidérer comme portion ordinaire de l'empire ſeulement, les ſommes immenſes qu'on exige d'elles par le monopole, ſeroient un impôt injuſte et onéreux ; c'eſt ſeulement à titre de produit et d'intérêts d'avances faites pour elles, qu'on peut en tirer autant de richeſſes. On comprend ainſi, comment,

comment, plus elle nous fourniſſent de productions, plus elles s'enrichiſſent; (et ce n'eſt pas, comme on ſait, l'effet ordinaire de l'impôt;) et comment enfin cet accroiſſement dans la maſſe de leurs fournitures, néceſſitant un plus grand nombre de demandes de nos denrées, donne la meſure reciproque de la proſpérité de la colonie et de la métropole.

" Cette réciprocité d'échanges et de richeſſes, ſi avantageuſe pour la France, nous fait un devoir dans ce moment de réparer les déſaſtres qu'un de ſes plus riches établiſſemens vient d'éprouver. La perte totale à Saint Domingue eſt eſtimée ſe monter à un capital de 5 à 6 cent millions, dont le revenu fourniſſoit au chargement annuel de cent cinquante vaiſſeaux. Mais cette plaie, quelque profonde qu'elle ſoit, ſe réparera par la fécondité du ſol et l'activité induſtrieuſe des colons, ſi l'on réunit à la fois des ſecours gratuits, des ſecours à titre de prêt; ſi le commerce, éclairé ſur ſes intérêts, qui ſe lient ici en totalité avec l'intérêt général, ſe prête aux malheurs des cir-

conſtances, s'il donne du temps à ſes débiteurs ruinés, et s'il ſait ſuſpendre ſes profits, pour les rendre plus aſſurés et plus durables. Il en a pris l'engagement généreux dans les nombreuſes adreſſes que ſes députés ont préſentées au roi, & je ne crains pas de me porter pour garant de l'exactitude avec laquelle cet engagement ſera rempli.

" Les premiers ſecours les plus appropriés aux circonſtances, les plus rapprochés des beſoins, ſont l'abandon de notre créance ſur les états-unis de l'Amérique. Cette manière de ſe libérer convient tout à la fois aux Américains et aux colons. Les premiers peuvent, à des conditions raiſonnables, fournir aux habitations ravagées, les objets de la néceſſité la plus urgente, tels que des bois, des vivres, des bêtes de ſomme, des animaux domeſtiques, et des maiſons qui, taillées dans les forêts du nord de l'Amérique, vont s'élever à l'inſtant, et remplacer à moins de frais les bâtimens en pierres détruits ou incendiés.

" Quelle plus utile deſtination pour les ſommes que la nation généreuſe avoit ſacrifiées

fiées à procurer l'indépendance de ſes alliés, et dont elle ſe croyoit payée avec uſure par leur indépendance même! Quel ſpectacle touchant pour le vrai philoſophe, que celui que lui préſentent les premiers biens de la liberté, réparant les maux de la licence!

" Une des grandes meſures qui coûteront d'autant moins à ſa majeſté qu'elles lui ſont préſentées par la conſtitution, c'eſt de s'en rapporter à l'intérêt des colons eux-mêmes, pour régler les formes de diſtribution et répartition de ces mêmes ſecours à ceux qui ont ſouffert de l'incendie et du ravage, ainſi que le mode de contribution convenable à établir entre ceux dont les poſſeſſions ont été épargnées.

" Les meſures de prévoyance forment la ſeconde claſſe de ſecours, et ſans doute la plus importante.

" A peine avoit-on connu les ſources de proſpérité que les colonies ouvroient à l'Europe que chaque puiſſance chercha à s'aſſurer la poſſeſſion excluſive de ces richeſſes. Toutes les fortifications qu'on y établit, furent dirigées par cet eſprit jaloux de conſerver,

ſerver, et d'après un ſyſtême de défenſe ſur les côtes, pour s'oppoſer aux invaſions du dehors. Comment, en effet, prémunir l'intérieur de la colonie, contre des ennemis auxquels on ne devoit pas s'attendre? Une triſte expérience vient de prouver que ce ſont les plus à craindre: elle doit néceſſairement opérer quelque changement dans le premier ſyſtême de fortification, qui d'ailleurs inſuffiſant par lui même, peut être ſupplée par des moyens plus puiſſans. Les fortifications qui de loin en loin bordent les côtes, plus effrayantes pour la terre qui les porte, que pour l'ennemi qui les évite, pourroient être avantageuſement remplacées par des vaiſſeaux. Les premières pourroient être utilement appuyées de pluſieurs petites redoutes placées plus avant dans l'intérieur, pour empêcher, en cas d'inſurrection, la communication par les mornes: ces poſtes de ſûreté, ſans danger pour la liberté, ſuffiroient contre la licence.

" L'établiſſement d'une gendarmerie coloniales, mieux organiſée que les anciennes milices de St. Domingue, compoſée uniquement

ment de propriétaires, dont la maſſe entière, à l'exemple de nos gardes nationales, ſeroit prête à marcher au premier ſignal, et dont une portion ſeulement feroit un ſervice actif et régulier ; .... des loix de police exécutées avec prudence et fermeté, qui s'appliqueroient à toutes les claſſes d'individus, aux hommes de toutes les couleurs ; un code complet de légiſlation, qui concilieroit à la fois et la confiance que l'on doit aux colons propriétaires, adminiſtrateurs nés de ces établiſſemens, et la protection due aux hommes qui cultivent, contre des traitemens d'une rigueur capricieuſe, exagérée ou inutile ; qui préviendroit et puniroit les révoltes, comme les abus d'autorité qui les provoquent, et qui traiteroit plus ſévèrement encore l'inſenſé ou plutôt le coupable qui trompe, que le malheureux abuſé qu'il ſoulève—un règlement nouveau ſur la manière de faire la traite, qui défende et puniſſe les excès de la cupidité, afin que ces triſtes et malheureuſes victimes de nos intérêts politiques, ne le ſoient plus du moins des intérêts particuliers, et qu'elles n'ayent pas à gémir tout

à-la-

à-la-fois, et des rigueurs d'un ſacrifice devenu néceſſaire pour prévenir de plus grands maux, et des cruautés privées d'une ſordide économie: tels ſont les moyens que le roi me charge de vous propoſer, et que vous peſerez dans votre ſageſſe. Rendons hommage à la vraie philantropie, dont les abus ſeuls et les fauſſes applications peuvent avoir eu les conſéquences funeſtes dont on l'accuſe. C'eſt à la ſollicitation, à la perſéverance touchante de quelques amis de l'humanité en Angleterre qu'on doit les deux derniers bills du parlement, relatifs à la traite, qui améliorent le ſort des nègres, fixent le nombre que doit contenir chaque bâtiment négrier, et font la part de l'avarice pour l'empêcher de ſe la faire elle-même. Un peuple dont la ſenſibilité naturelle avoit devancé la loi, cherchera à les ſurpaſſer encore par des loix plus douces et plus humaines. Si vous joignez aux moyens que je viens de propoſer, l'envoi de troupes pour garnir ces différens points fortifiés, en combinant l'influence funeſte à la longue, d'un climat ſi différent du nôtre, ſi

dangereux

dangereux ſur-tout, et ſi propre à relâcher les liens de la diſcipline militaire, peut-être ſera-t-il utile de n'y laiſſer les mêmes corps que deux ou trois ans au plus; peut-être auſſi que la crainte fondée de faire paſſer la mer à une grande partie de l'armée par ces changemens ſucceſſifs et triennaux, vous déterminera à d'autres meſures que les circonſtances vous préſenteront.

" Quant à la défenſe extérieure, les principales fortifications qui conviennent à des colonies, ſont des eſcadres toujours ſubſiſtantes, nombre de vaiſſeaux toujours en croiſières: voilà les citadelles qu'il nous importe d'employer à cet objet; elles ont l'avantage d'élever des matelots et des officiers, d'entretenir notre marine, et de faire reſpecter le pavillon national ſur toutes les mers.

" Si au milieu de ces grands intérêts, il m'étoit permis, meſſieurs, de vous parler de mon zèle, je renouvellerois ici l'aſſurance qu'aucune des entraves dont on cherche à l'embarraſſer ne pourra le ralentir. Les ſoins de l'adminiſtration la plus importante peut-

peut-être, mais à coup ſûr la plus compliquée, ſuffiroient ſans doute pour remplir tous mes momens. Obſervez, meſſieurs, qu'elle réunit tous les genres d'intérêt, tous les autres genres d'adminiſtration, outre ceux qui lui ſont propres; qu'elle embraſſe dans ſes détails les hommes de toutes les nations, de toutes les couleurs, de tous les préjugés, les militaires de toutes les armes, qu'elle néceſſite toutes les eſpèces de comptabilité, qu'elle exige ſur tous ces objets la vigilance la plus active et la plus ſoutenue. Jugez s'il eſt poſſible que l'homme chargé de cette tâche immenſe, et qui s'y livre tout entier, oſe eſpérer de la remplir, s'il eſt ſans ceſſe détourné de ces grands intérêts, par des dénonciations multipliées et minutieuſes, au point de dégrader le moyen puiſſant et néceſſaire de la dénonciation fondée. Et ne croyez pas, meſſieurs, que je veuille par-là détourner vos regards de celle qui exiſte contre moi; je veux ſeulement prémunir votre ſageſſe contre celles que nous attendons tous, et qui ſeront nombreuſes ſans doute, parce que

notre ſévère exactitude à faire exécuter les nouvelles loix, et à réformer les abus qu'elles ont condamnés, ne manquera pas de ſuſciter contre nous tous les individus qui vivoient de ces abus, et qui ſouffriront de ces réformes. Vous croirez ſans peine, Meſſieurs, que ces mêmes individus ſeroient nos prôneurs les plus zélés, ſi moins occupés de l'intérêt national que des intérêts particuliers, nous étions capables de compoſer avec les principes, et de ne pas enviſager l'eſtime publique, comme la ſeule récompenſe que des miniſtres citoyens puiſſent ambitionner.

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.

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